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**Not homeless anymore**

**The potential of Housing First for including homeless people in the housing market**

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## Introduction

Homeless people are, per definition, excluded from the housing market, or at its very margins. They live on the streets, or in emergency shelters and temporary accommodations. They live in institutions, illegally occupied buildings, or under an order of eviction. They live in mobile homes, garages, or in overcrowded dwellings. Under these conditions, they are supposed not to have a place they can call home, and are for this reason defined as home-less. This rather positivist assumption, of the homeless not having a place they can call home, is routinely attributed them by social research, social services, and the common belief, understating the fact that one may consider different living situations as his/her home, included the streets. A re-conceptualisation of home is anyhow out of the scope of this research, whose focus is on the contradictory outcomes generated by this assumption. One would indeed expect that from such a social construction of the home-less would derive a certain institutional response, that is a set of policies, measures and services aimed at supporting homeless people in getting access to places they can call home. Instead, many services targeted to this heterogeneous group aim at physically, mentally or socially recovering them, without regard to their actual experience of a place they can call home. Night shelters are not exactly the kind of place you can easily call a home; collective accommodations unlikely generate that feeling of being at home; and temporary housing solutions may also result in a certain sense of home, but just for a while. Such an approach is based on another assumption: that one should experience a not-well-defined extent of physical, mental and social wellbeing to be able to get and maintain a place he/she can call home. Until that indeterminate level is achieved, homeless people are therefore kept outside the housing market to be placed in emergency, collective and/or temporary housing solutions.

Housing First came to challenge this approach. This service model aimed at “ending homelessness”, at least for those homeless people experiencing mental illness (Tsemberis, 2010), is informed by the opposite assumption: everyone should have a place he/she can call home, and everyone is able to get along with it. There is more: the experience of having a home may also cause an improvement of the physical, mental and social conditions of homeless people. The first and most prominent action of services, programmes and projects informed by the Housing First approach is therefore providing homeless people with a place where they can feel at home. Homeless people entering Housing First services automatically

exit their condition of homelessness: they now have a home, they are not homeless anymore. Housing First provides indeed its beneficiaries with a housing solution. Just like the housing solutions provided by other services based on the supported housing model, it is independent and comes with a flexible community-based social support. But, differently from those services, this housing solution is not temporary, it is stable, and the social support is not binding, it is optional. There is more, and this more is at the very core of this research: the housing solution provided through Housing First is actually an apartment in the regular housing market, for which homeless people sign a regular tenancy contract. Housing First in fact provides homeless people with access to regular, stable and affordable housing; to a place they can easily call home.

It is worth repeating: Housing First is not simply about housing; it is about *access* to housing. The magnitude of this difference has not been completely grasped by research on Housing First. Much of the increasingly rich literature on Housing First have focused on its outcomes for the beneficiaries, mostly in terms of housing retention, health conditions and social integration, and for the welfare systems, mostly in terms of its alleged cost-effectiveness; its genesis, institutionalisation and diffusion, with a lively debate on what should be labelled as Housing First across the world; its philosophical roots, between liberal values and social rights. Rather surprisingly, very little has instead been produced on the relationship between Housing First and the housing sector. The circumstance that a service model called Housing First, whose first principle is housing as a basic human right, and whose first action is providing homeless people with access to housing, has not been put in relation with housing regimes, housing systems, housing policies and housing markets sounds a little bit ironic. It is probably the result of an historic tradition, in both social research and practice, of framing homelessness policies as social policies, and homelessness services as social services, with no or little connection with housing policies and services. The purpose of this research is to contribute to a re-framing of Housing First as a matter of social *and* housing policy; as a social *and* housing service; as inherently related to both welfare *and* housing systems; or, at least, as something that may have relevance for the housing sector, and gain new insights from being studied from the entry point of housing.

Many fascinating sociological questions rise from considering Housing First as a key to access to regular, stable and affordable housing and as a driver of housing inclusion. For instance: should a society grant access to housing to all homeless people? Or just to specific

sub-groups? If it is the second, what about the other homeless people not included in Housing First programmes, should they stay out of the housing market? And what about then other-than-homeless people excluded from the housing market? Or those who are in the housing market but whose houses are not affordable? And again: how many houses do we need to grant access to stable and affordable housing to all the homeless people through Housing First? Are they available on the housing market? In order to address these questions, the research investigates existing practices of Housing First in Europe. Five initiatives implementing the Housing First model in five European cities have been studied for the purposes of this research: Housing First in Bologna, Italy; Budapest, Hungary; London, UK; Stockholm, Sweden; and Vienna, Austria. Insights on how Housing First practices deal with the proposed questions will be provided, together with a discussion on their potential for including the homeless into the housing market, following a path that develops in four chapters.

The theoretical framework informing the research is described in chapter one. First, we need to start from a definition of home, and a definition of homelessness. Following Edgar and Meert (2005), home is conceptualised as composed by three domains: the physical, the social and the legal domain. The three domains refer, respectively, to: the availability of an appropriate space; the suitability of the space for protecting one's privacy and enjoying one's social relation; the disposal of a legal title of possession of the space. A person has a home if he/she enjoys all the three domains. Otherwise, the absence of one or more of these domains defines the condition of homelessness or housing exclusion. This conceptualisation is at the basis of the European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS) elaborated by the European Federation of Organisation Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) and the European Observatory on Homelessness (EOH), which is also adopted in this research to define and classify homelessness. The ETHOS typology identifies and describes four categories of homelessness: rooflessness, houselessness, insecure housing and inadequate housing. Rooflessness includes people with no place to live, living rough or in emergency shelters. Houselessness includes people without a proper accommodation, but temporarily housed in institutional accommodations or short-term transitional housing. Insecure housing comprises people living in adequate accommodation but at risk of homelessness because of circumstances like illegal occupation, rent arrears, or threat of eviction. Inadequate housing includes people who live in an inadequate accommodation, like mobile homes or extremely overcrowded dwellings. The value of the ETHOS typology for the

purposes of this research is in its capacity of keeping in the same definition both homelessness and housing exclusion, individual and structural factors, and the social and housing dimensions of homelessness. Furthermore, it is the most diffused definition of homelessness in Europe, which also informs the Housing First practices studied in this research. As a second step, we need to get information on the actual extent of the phenomenon of homelessness. Sadly, data produced by surveys aimed at measuring homelessness in different countries are not comparable, since they are collected by different agencies, with different methods and drawing on different definitions of homelessness. However, an attempt of extracting roughly comparable data for the five countries where the case studies of this research are implemented is made by referring to the ETHOS typology. Given the qualitative and quantitative definition of the phenomenon of homelessness, we then need insights on how institutional treatment of the phenomenon is managed and organised. A review of homelessness policies and services in the five countries of the research is thus provided, by which it emerges that homelessness is essentially managed as a social problem to be treated by social policies and services. As a final step, the chapter elaborates on the relationship between housing and homelessness: to what extent is housing a driver of homelessness? To what extent the structural and institutional features of different housing systems may affect homelessness? Edgar, Doherty and Meert (2002) provide the necessary theoretical framework to assert that yes, there is a very close relationships between how access to housing is regulated and homelessness. Housing vulnerability, that is the condition of being denied access to affordable housing, is a primary cause and component of the condition of homelessness. The analysis of Edgar et al. demonstrates that housing vulnerability is increasing in Europe since the late 1970s because of a growing marketisation of the provision of housing associated with a retrenchment of the state in this sector. To say it differently: access to affordable housing is increasingly difficult, and this broadens homelessness and makes it harder for homeless people to exit their condition. This general statement should then be put in context. The concept of housing regime provides a suitable basis for this operation, and it is used across the text as a referencing framework for comparing data, facts and outcomes between different countries and systems. In this respect, we draw on the typology of housing regimes elaborated by Kemeny (1995; 2001; 2006), which distinguished between a unitary and a dual housing regime. Of the five countries considered in this research, two of them, Austria and Sweden, pertain to the group of unitary housing regimes; two, Italy and the UK, to the group of dual housing regimes; and one, Hungary, is not classified by Kemeny, but there are reasons to consider it in the group of dual



housing regimes. The link between housing systems and homelessness is then analysed for the five contexts of the research, by discussing on three key aspects for Housing First: housing availability; housing affordability; tenure security in the rental sector. Indeed, to include homeless people in the housing market through Housing First we need available houses for rent, which is connected with the structure of national and local housing markets, and with housing policy orientations. Those, many or few, available houses should also be affordable for homeless people to be included, which is connected both with the market, in terms of rent prices, and the state, in terms of housing policies including for instance rent regulation and housing benefits. Finally, housing inclusion should be permanent, not on a temporary basis. Housing stability is a prime objective of Housing First, and it is directly connected with the degree of tenure security experienced by tenants in different housing systems. To conclude, once we have: defined home, defined homelessness, quantified homelessness, described the institutional management of homelessness, established the link between housing and homelessness, described the main features of some European housing systems in relation with homelessness, we finally provide a conceptualisation of what we mean by including homeless people in the housing market.

And then comes Housing First. The origins, principles, objectives, methodologies and activities of the original model are extensively described in the second chapter, by referring to the guidelines published by the inventor of Housing First, Sam Tsemberis (2010), which clearly limits the scope of the model to chronic homeless people with severe mental illness. The service was firstly tested in New York City in 1992 by the non-profit organisation Pathways to Housing, founded by the same Tsemberis, a psychologist who was certainly (and properly) more interested in finding a better treatment for his homeless mentally ill patients, then in including them in the housing market. That experimental programme has then gradually evolved to become a service model and at the same time a policy strategy guiding the way homelessness services are designed and delivered in the United States and beyond. This exciting trajectory is described in terms of both the institutionalisation of Housing First in the United States and its diffusion in other parts of the world. In particular, for the purposes of this research, we focus on the diffusion of Housing First in Europe, where it is mostly implemented in the form of small-scale and experimental local projects, although in some countries, like Italy and Sweden as long as this research is concerned, its local implementation is coordinated by national networks. Both the establishment of practices of Housing First proposing their own variations at the local scale, and the promotion of a lively debate by

FEANTSA at the European scale, have questioned various aspects proposed in the original Pathways Housing First model. In particular, seminal documents framing the construction of a “European way” to Housing First (ECCH, 2011; Busch-Geertsema, 2013) call for an adoption of Housing First as a policy strategy to address all forms of homelessness and to provide access to housing to a wide range of homeless people, not limiting its scope to chronic homeless people with mental illness. Such an orientation, effectively adopted by local practices like the projects in Bologna and Vienna in this research, uncovers pivotal issues on the housing side, which have been anticipated at the beginning of this introduction. Some of them refer to the social and housing needs we want Housing First to meet: should it grant access to housing to all the homeless? Or just to the chronic homeless with mental illness like in the original model? Or just to other to-be-defined sub-groups of homeless people? In other words: which is the potential of Housing First for including the homeless in the housing market? Other questions are very practical: are there houses enough to include all the homeless we want to include through Housing First? Are these allegedly available house affordable enough for the homeless we want to include through Housing First? Do they come with sufficient tenure security to promote housing inclusion on a permanent basis? Others, finally, radically question the ontology of welfare state: is it socially just to grant access to regular and stable housing to a number of people through a targeted programme in a context of exclusion of larger parts of the population from access to affordable housing?

Huge questions, indeed. The extent to which they are actually dealt with by existing Housing First practices in Europe has been investigated through a comparative case-study research described in chapter three. Five initiatives implementing the Housing First model in five European cities have been studied: Housing First in Bologna, Italy; Budapest, Hungary; London, UK; Stockholm, Sweden; and Vienna, Austria. The initiatives have been selected within the framework of a European research project called *Poverty Reduction in Europe: Social Policy and Innovation (ImPRovE)*<sup>1</sup>. The project aimed at investigating the role of social innovation in complementing, reinforcing and modifying macro-level policies, and for this purpose an international research team, of which I made part, selected and conducted 31 case studies of socially innovative practices in seven European countries and Brazil. Six out of these 31 case studies regarded initiatives implementing Housing First in Europe. Afterwards, I decided to drop the case study of Housing First in the city of Ghent, Belgium, which was not relevant for the purposes of this research. The case studies were carried out

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<sup>1</sup> <http://improve-research.eu/>

between October 2013 and March 2015 through: an in-depth desk analysis, including official and informal documents, web sites, reports; 3 to 5 qualitative semi-structured interviews for each case study with people involved in the management of the initiative; a focus group involving 7 to 12 people participating in the governance of the initiative. This research on the potential of Housing First for the housing inclusion of the homeless is embedded in this path, which has its pros and cons. The pros mainly regard the extent and relevance of the material I could draw on to feed the research. The cons regard three aspects. First, the case studies have been selected according to the criteria established by the research team of the ImPRovE project, and not according to criteria established within the realm of this research. Second, the conduction of the case studies have been informed by the research objectives and questions of the ImPRovE research, with a focus on governance aspects of the initiatives more than on housing-related issues. Third, I have not personally conducted the field research in all the cities of the research: I was personally involved in the field research in Bologna and Stockholm, while the field research in Budapest, London, and Vienna was conducted by my colleagues in the research team. The whole methodological process and the actions I took to limit a possible negative impact of these criticalities on the quality of the research are discussed in the first part of the chapter. The five case studies are then extensively described in their genesis, timing, target group, governance asset, funding, activities, and the modality of housing and social support provision. The national and local contexts framing the initiatives are also presented, with a focus on homelessness and housing systems. Finally, some relevant issues related to the housing dimension are discussed for each case study, with reference to structural conditions regarding housing availability, housing affordability and tenure security, and the strategies adopted by the project to cope with those structural conditions.

These latter issues lay the foundation for the presentation of the main findings of the research in chapter four. Drawing on the experience of the five case studies, the potential and limits of Housing First for including the homeless in the housing market are explored. A review of the target groups of the five case studies allows us to elaborate on the scope of Housing First, that is the kind of social and housing needs it addresses. Two of the five initiatives, in Bologna and Vienna, extend the scope of Housing First, at least ideally, to all the homeless people, included people living in insecure and inadequate housing as for the ETHOS typology. They are however two small-size projects; in order to discuss on the extent to which Housing First could actually be a strategy to include all the homeless in the housing

market, we also need to know the number of people that are supposed to be included through Housing First. A precise estimate of this number is not available, because of lack of precise and comparable data on homelessness; nonetheless, a rough attempt to define an estimated user base for Housing First in the five cities of the research is made, which would range from 0.2 to 0.5 per cent of the total population, but it is probably very much underestimated. Once presented this framework on which and how many homeless people are included, and could potentially be included, in the housing market through Housing First, we then turn our attention on the relationship with housing systems, that is the core of the research. The potential of Housing First for the housing inclusion of the homeless is put in relation with structural and institutional conditions of the national and local housing systems framing its implementation, in terms of housing availability, housing affordability, degree of social competition to access housing, and tenure security. The analysis results in a scale of the potential of Housing First for including homeless people in the housing market, from very limited to high potential. Housing First has a very limited potential for including the homeless in contexts, like the city of Budapest, characterised by: small rental sectors and social housing sectors, low affordability of available houses for rent, high competition between social groups to access affordable housing, limited tenure security experienced by tenants in the housing system. These conditions make it extremely hard to find available affordable houses for Housing First tenants, and raise broader issues in terms of equal access to affordable housing in the local society. The potential of Housing First is limited in contexts where, like in London and Stockholm, urban housing markets are extremely tight because of a combination of factors deriving from a substantial demographic pressure increasing the demand for housing and a housing shortage due to both the high demand and the very low rates of newly built or renewed affordable housing, also as a consequence of the marketisation of public housing providers. In those contexts, housing affordability and social competition for accessing affordable houses are relevant issues despite the rather large availability in the rental and social housing sectors. A moderate potential for the housing inclusion of homeless people through Housing First is observable in those contexts, like the city of Bologna, characterised by small social housing sectors but not-so-small rental sectors combined with a not so severe problem of housing affordability and a not so hard social competition for accessing affordable housing. In those contexts, the private rental sector may be a valid alternative to social housing to procure apartments for Housing First tenants, albeit with possible negative consequences on the degree of experienced tenure security. Finally, Housing First has, at least ideally, a high potential for including the homeless in housing

markets characterised by very large rental and social housing sectors, like in the city of Vienna. Such an exceptionally large availability of houses for rent and for social rent limits problems of housing affordability and the competition for accessing an affordable housing solution, making it feasible to include also a large number of homeless people in the housing market through Housing First. Structural conditions may be challenged by the agency of the promoters of Housing First practices. They can adopt strategies to procure apartments for their social purposes in both the public and private market and guarantee the affordability of those apartments, i.e. by establishing alliances with other players like public housing providers or private landlords. The analysis of these coping strategies highlights the importance of taking very seriously housing-related issues in designing and implementing Housing First practices in terms of: hiring a housing specialist in charge of procuring apartments and establishing profitable relationships with housing providers; involving housing providers in the management of the initiatives; establishing permanent local networks for finding structural solutions to structural problems, at least at the local level. Once presented insightful information on the potential of Housing First for the housing inclusion of the homeless, and the strategies to release this potential, we finally come back to the frame we used to compare data and outcomes in different contexts, that is Kemeny's typology of housing regimes. Which is the relationship between the potential of Housing First and the two different types of housing regimes? Indeed, no direct correlation emerges from the analysis. The two countries backed by a unitary housing regime, Austria and Sweden, produce opposite outcomes in terms of the potential of Housing First for including the homeless in the housing market, although a major reason for this is in the specificities of the local urban housing markets more than in the effects of macro-level housing regimes. The dual housing regime appears instead as generally less favourable for a structural housing inclusion of the homeless through Housing First programmes, although to different extents depending on local conditions.

These findings lead us straight to the conclusions. Housing First is about access to housing. It is also about many other things, like community integration and a better quality of life, but, as its name promises, it is first of all about access to housing. It is a housing policy, whose potential is limited not only by the configuration of national and local housing systems but also by its not being understood as a housing policy. The provision and regulation of access to affordable housing is a housing policy task to be performed by means of different instruments, like schemes to promote access to home ownership, or to favourable mortgage

schemes, shared ownership schemes, rent control mechanisms, rent deposit schemes, direct public provision of social housing, housing subsidies to private housing providers, housing benefits, fiscal incentives and deductions. Housing First could be, or should be, one of them. With defined scopes in terms of target groups and housing needs to be met, integrated with the scopes and housing needs met by other measures. The understanding of Housing First as a housing policy may also provide a relevant contribute at different scales to the never-ending debate on the modalities through which contemporary societies are (not) granting access to decent and affordable housing for all.

# 1. Homelessness and housing: disentangling the relationship

## 1.1 Defining homelessness: a matter of social or housing vulnerability?

The understanding of homelessness is uncertain. Decades of research, policy, literature, filmmaking, public debate have not produced a clear and shared idea of what has to be intended with homelessness. People experiencing homelessness have been defined referring to different archetypes: from the vagrant (Castel, 1995) to the hobo (Anderson, 1923) to the *clochard* (Vexliard, 1957), up to the extension of the definition to people actually living in houses that are not adequate or secure (Edgar and Meert, 2005). A sound way of dealing with this variety and complexity is starting from the beginning, that is from the concept of home. Homelessness is, literally, the condition of being deprived of the home, which makes the meaning of home the element on which every definition of homelessness should be based upon. A dictionary definition considers home as “the place where you live and feel that you belong”<sup>2</sup>. The term “place” is rather misleading since it does not explicitly refer to a house but, following the dictionary definition, to “any point, building, area, town or country”<sup>3</sup>, which paves the way to a rather broad interpretation of what we should consider as home. This kind of definition well describes the paradox pointed out by Craig Gurney: even the homeless can experience home, intended as “the cultural milieu of life on the street”, which becomes “a means of redefining home” (Gurney, 1990 quoted in Somerville, 1992, p. 530). A pragmatic way out the paradox consists in intending “the place where you live” as a physical building, although this raises further questions on what defines a physical building as adequate enough to be considered as a home. In any case, a physical building is not enough, as of the second part of the dictionary definition: home is also a feeling of belonging. Drawing on these muddy forewords many attempts to provide definitions of home have been made. A number of dimensions related to the concept of home have been identified by Watson and Austerberry (1986), who connect home to decent material conditions and standards, an adequate place to live and sleep, physical and emotional well-being, loving and caring social relations, control and privacy. The concept of homelessness is consequently defined by the experience of poor material conditions, the absence of an adequate place to live and sleep, the lack of physical and emotional well-being, of social relations, of control and privacy. Somerville (1992)

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<sup>2</sup> Collins Cobuild. Essential English Dictionary, HarperCollins Publishers, London, 1988.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*.

focuses on the symbolic status of home, which expresses itself in design features (materiality), mode of disposition and action towards neighbours, degree of territorial control, degree of respectability, quality of domestic life. Home is not conceivable as something existing per se, but it is set in a complex context of social status relations. The condition of homelessness is therefore defined by the lack of social status and respectability, whose direct consequence is the homeless being seen as outcast or rejected. A common idea underlying these and other attempts of defining home is that the concept of home can be better grasped by referring to dimensions related to different spheres: material, psychological, emotional, relational, social. Each of these dimensions needed however to be further refined to arrive to operational definitions. Various attempts have been made in this respect and the most refined and recognised result is the ETHOS definition of homelessness.

### ***1.1.1 The ETHOS definition of homelessness***

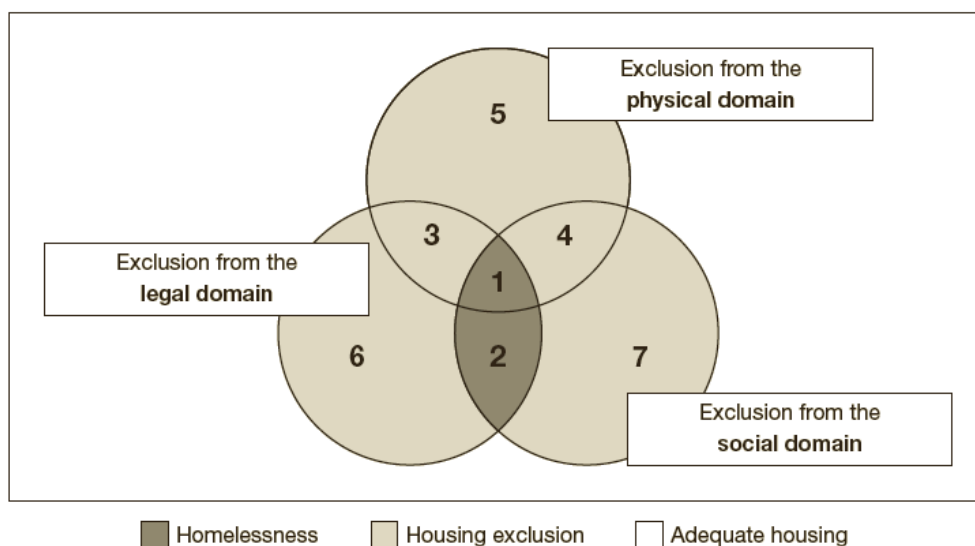
The European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion (ETHOS) developed by FEANTSA (European Federation of National Organisations Working with the Homeless)<sup>4</sup> and EOH (the European Observatory on Homelessness) is the most comprehensive international definition and classification of homelessness. It is particularly suitable to our scope, for different reasons: it stems from a conceptualisation of home; it assumes a dynamic perspective allowing to consider pathways into and out of homelessness; it considers personal, relational, institutional and structural factors; it considers both social and housing dimensions. At the basis of the ETHOS typology lays a conceptualisation of home as being composed by three domains: physical domain, social domain and legal domain. The physical domain refers to the availability of a space suitable for the satisfaction of the individual's needs; the social domain entails the possibility to protect one's privacy and enjoy social relations; the legal domain refers to the disposal of a security of occupation with a legal title of possession (Edgar and Meert, 2005). The three domains relate to each other as shown in Figure 1.1.

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<sup>4</sup> [www.feantsa.org](http://www.feantsa.org)



**Figure 1.1.** ETHOS model for defining living situations as homelessness, housing exclusion or adequate housing according to physical, social and legal domains.



*Source: Amore et al., 2011.*

In this theoretical framework the full enjoyment of the three domains determines an adequate living situation (i.e. a home), while the absence of one or more of the three dimensions determines a condition of homelessness or housing exclusion, giving rise to seven possible situations. Homelessness is the dark grey part, resulting from a total exclusion from the three domains or from an exclusion from the social and legal domains. Housing exclusion is the light grey part, resulting from the exclusion from one of the three domains or from both the physical and legal domain or from both the physical and social domain. This first rough classification has been refined to finally include four conceptual categories and 13 operational categories, as shown in Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1.** ETHOS – European Typology of Homelessness and Housing Exclusion.

Conceptual Category			Operational Category		Living Situation	Generic Definition
	ROOFLESSNESS	1	People living rough	1.1	Public space or external space	Living in the streets or public spaces, without a shelter that can be defined as living quarters
		2	People in emergency accommodation	2.1	Night shelter	People with no usual place of residence who make use of overnight shelter, low threshold shelter
	HOUSELESSNESS	3	People in accommodation for the homeless	3.1	Homeless hostel	Where the period of stay is intended to be short term
				3.2	Temporary accommodation	
				3.3	Transitional supported accommodation	
		4	People in women's shelter	4.1	Women's shelter accommodation	Women accommodated due to experience of domestic violence and where the period of stay is intended to be short term
		5	People in accommodation for immigrants	5.1	Temporary accommodation / reception centres	Immigrants in reception or short term accommodation due to their immigrant status
				5.2	Migrant workers accommodation	
		6	People due to be released from institutions	6.1	Penal institutions	No housing available prior to release
				6.2	Medical institutions	Stay longer than needed due to lack of housing
				6.3	Children's institutions	No housing identified (e.g. by 18 <sup>th</sup> birthday)
		7	People receiving longer-term support (due to homelessness)	7.1	Residential care for older homeless people	Long stay accommodation with care for formerly homeless people (normally more than one year)
				7.2	Supported accommodation for formerly homeless people	
INSECURE HOUSING	8	People living in insecure accommodation		8.1	Temporarily with family/friends	Living in conventional housing but not the usual or place of residence due to lack of housing
				8.2	No legal (sub)tenancy	Occupation of dwelling with no legal tenancy; illegal occupation of dwelling
				8.3	Illegal occupation of land	Occupation of land with no legal rights
	9	People living under		9.1	Legal orders	Where orders for eviction are

			threat of eviction		enforced (rented)	operative
				9.2	Repossession orders (owned)	Where mortgage has legal order to repossess
		10	People living under threat of violence	10.1	Police recorded incidents	Where police action is taken to ensure place of safety for victims of domestic violence
	INADEQUATE HOUSING	11	People living in temporary/non-conventional structures	11.1	Mobile homes	Not intended as place of usual residence
				11.2	Non-conventional building	Makeshift shelter, shack or shanty
				11.3	Temporary structure	Semi-permanent structure hut or cabin
		12	People living in unfit housing	12.1	Occupied dwellings unfit for habitation	Defined as unfit for habitation by national legislation or building regulations
		13	People living in extreme overcrowding	13.1	Highest national norm of overcrowding	Defined as exceeding national density standard for floor-space or useable rooms
	Note: Short stay is defined as normally less than one year; Long stay is defined as more than one year					

Source: <http://www.feantsa.org/spip.php?article120&lang=en>

The four conceptual categories constituting homelessness according to the ETHOS definition are rooflessness, houselessness, insecure housing and inadequate housing. Rooflessness includes people with no place to live, living rough or in emergency shelters. Houselessness includes people without a proper accommodation, but temporarily housed in institutional accommodations, like hostels, centres targeted at specific groups (e.g. asylum seekers) or short term transitional housing. Insecure housing comprises people currently living in adequate accommodation but at risk of homelessness because of precariousness in the legal or social domain (e.g. illegal occupation, rent arrears, threat of eviction). Inadequate housing includes people who live in an inadequate accommodation, like mobile homes or extremely overcrowded dwellings. The theoretical framework supporting the typology has been criticised for lack of clarity in the distinction between homelessness and housing exclusion (Amore et al., 2011). The way the threshold between the two domains has been constructed is unclear: homelessness corresponds to exclusion from the three domains of home or from two of them, but only if these two are the legal and social one. The intersections between legal and physical and between social and physical domains fall into housing exclusion. This choice is not explained. Furthermore the typology distinguishes between homelessness and housing exclusion but not between homeless and housing excluded people: all people experiencing one of the proposed living situations are defined as homeless, even when they fall in the domain of housing exclusion (Amore et al., 2011). An implicit

distinction between primary homelessness corresponding to rooflessness and houselessness and secondary homelessness corresponding to the categories of insecure housing and inadequate housing is made but not explicitly explained. Notwithstanding these weaknesses, the ETHOS typology remains the most comprehensive, influential and internationally recognised definition of homelessness (Busch-Geertsema, 2010). The typology also aims to overcome the long-term dichotomy between individual and structural causes of homelessness. Two major ideological perspectives have indeed historically struggled to construct definitions of homelessness (Jacobs et al., 1999). The minimalist definition considers homelessness as the consequence of individual frailties (e.g. vagrancy, alcoholism, mental illness, unwillingness to work). The structuralist definition defines it as the result of structural conditions related to the way welfare state, housing and labour market are organised (Jacobs et al., 1999; Edgar et al., 2002; Stephens et al., 2010). The individualistic stance dominated research and practice on homelessness until the late 1980s. Since then a new attention on structural dimensions has blurred the boundaries between homelessness and housing hardship. The definition of homelessness has been trapped within these two ideological perspectives for a long time. The need for an integrated perspective capable to include both individual and structural factors was evident, and the ETHOS typology of homelessness and housing exclusion also respond to this need, embracing a multi-dimensional explanation which includes four types of risk factors increasing the possibility of becoming homeless: structural, institutional, relational and personal factors (Edgar, 2009). Structural factors include unemployment or unstable job, lack of affordable housing, barriers to access to housing for specific groups or persons (e.g. immigrants, young people, potential trouble makers), repossessions and evictions, retirement (Busch-Geertsema et al., 2010; Stephens et al., 2010; Edgar 2009; Edgar et al., 2002). Institutional factors mainly refer to the incapacity of the social protection system to provide support to prevent or tackle homelessness because of unavailability of services or lack of coordination. This includes matters of access to and allocation of resources as well as institutionalisation mechanisms in collective accommodations, hospitals and prisons (Busch-Geertsema et al., 2010; Edgar 2009). Relational factors include breakdowns, separations, domestic violence, bereavements (Busch-Geertsema et al., 2010; Edgar 2009). Personal factors include mental health problems, drug and/or alcohol abuse, disability, low educational attainment (Busch-Geertsema et al., 2010; Edgar 2009). Another important feature of the ETHOS typology is its attention to both the social and housing dimensions of homelessness, which is of particular relevance for this research.

### *1.1.2 The social and housing dimensions of homelessness*

Is homelessness a matter of social or housing vulnerability? The definition of home reported at the very beginning of this chapter (“the place where you live and feel that you belong”) provides a first intuitive response: it is a matter of both. A place where to live is as important as a feeling of belonging that transforms that place in a place where one can enjoy his/her personal and relational life. The conceptualisation of home underlying the ETHOS typology go along this way, identifying three constitutive domains of home: the physical, the social and the legal one, explicitly linking the housing and the social dimensions. The weight of the two dimensions in determining homelessness is yet under debate. Some scholars consider the housing dimension as constitutive of homelessness, others consider it as a dimension among others: employment status, health conditions, addictions, relational network<sup>5</sup>. It is difficult, if not impossible, to identify one event precipitating a person into homelessness and decide if it comes from the social or from the housing sphere. The ETHOS definition aimed at overcoming this dichotomy, by including both social and housing factors; the outcome of this operation is actually contested. It has been charged of being too much unbalanced towards the housing dimension (Tosi, 2010). It ends up in presenting a continuum from a situation of absence of housing (rooflessness) to a situation of adequate housing, going through situations of houselessness, insecure and inadequate housing. The question is almost irrelevant for the primary homelessness, including roofless and houseless people in the ETHOS typology. These two groups represent an area of overlap between different definitions of homelessness, either focusing on housing or social dimension. The area of housing exclusion is more contested: according to some authors (Tosi, 2010; Marpsat, 2005), some situations of inadequate or insecure housing may not constitute, as such, a risk of homelessness; they are only if other factors are present, like unemployment, low income, discrimination. In other words, not all housing problems can be identified as risks of homelessness, as the ETHOS typology seems to implicitly assert. This critics pinpoints a weakness of the ETHOS definition: apart from few exceptions (e.g. domestic violence or immigrant status), and despite the reference to both dimensions in the theoretical premises, the typology almost entirely refers to the housing domain. But what do we exactly mean by social and housing dimension of homelessness?

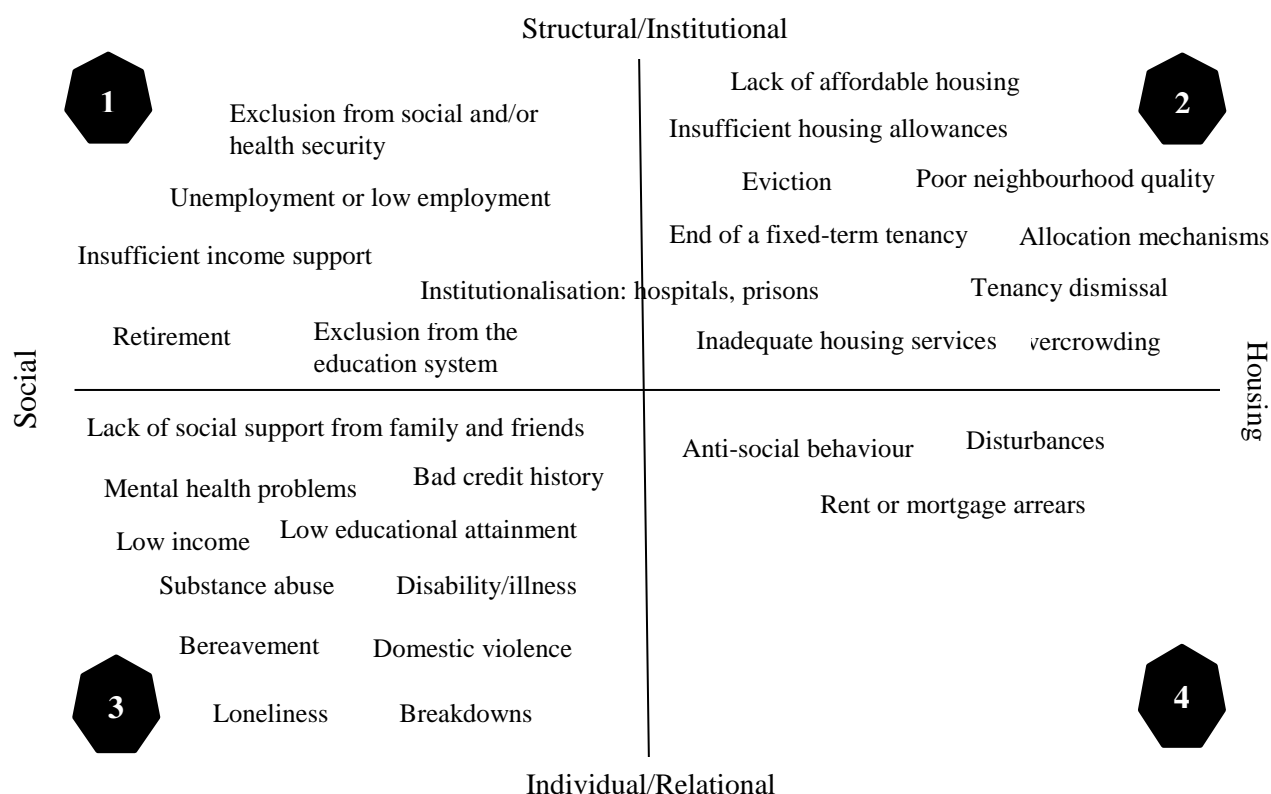
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<sup>5</sup> For a resume of the debate see FEANTSA, 2008.

The relationship between the two dimensions in constituting homelessness can be disentangled as follows. Socio-economic problems affecting the possibility of entering or remaining in a condition of homelessness include: relational breakdowns (usually with a partner or parents), low income, unemployment or unstable job, retirement, disability, drug and/or alcohol abuse, mental health problems, particular social conditions (immigrants, women, young people, lone parents) (Stephens et al., 2010). Changes in the social and demographic structure of European societies have undermined the role of the sphere of the reciprocity, so that some life transitions like family break up, job loss and retirement have become critical (Edgar et al., 2002). Housing problems mainly include: end of a fixed-term tenancy, loss of tenancy, evictions, overcrowding, housing affordability (both of purchase and rent), lack of social housing, neighbourhood quality (Stephens et al., 2010; Busch-Geertsema et al., 2010; FEANTSA, 2008; Edgar et al., 2002). The condition of homelessness always entails problems referring to both the social and housing dimension, which however combine in a unique way for each single case. Furthermore, the extent to which these problems actually result in homelessness strongly depend also on available welfare provisions in different sectors: housing (social housing, housing allowances, rent control, mortgage support), social and health assistance (minimum income schemes, social benefits, pensions, substance addiction and mental health services, access for immigrants), employment (unemployment benefits, active labour market measures). It is a highly context-sensitive matter: different welfare regimes, but also different local welfare configurations, produce different outcomes.

Both social and housing dimensions contain individual, relational, structural and institutional risk factors. Figure 1.2 visualizes the relationship between all these dimensions and factors. For reasons of simplicity, individual and relational factors conflate in a unique label, as structural and institutional factors.

**Figure 1.2.** Dimensions and risk factors of homelessness.



*Sources: Our elaboration from Busch-Geertsema et al., 2010; Stephens et al., 2010; Edgar 2009; FEANTSA, 2008; Edgar et al., 2002.*

In Figure 1.2 risk factors are distributed in four quarters. Quarter 1 groups structural/institutional risk factors pertaining to the social dimension; quarter 2 includes structural/institutional risk factors pertaining to the housing dimension; quarter 3 groups individual/relational factors related to the social dimension; and quarter 4 includes individual/relational risk factors related to the housing dimension. Structural and individual factors are clearly interrelated; individual issues can arise from and be put under pressure by structural disadvantages and forces. It is however out of the scope of the present work to discuss the extent to which factors like mental health problems, disabilities, or bad credit histories have to be considered as connected to the individual or to social norms defining under which conditions one is treated as disable or mentally ill or in debts. The housing dimension of homelessness is clearly unbalanced towards structural and institutional risk factors. Loss of tenancy can have both individual and structural explanations: it can derive from the individual being in rent or mortgage arrears, or from certain behaviours of the tenant (e.g. physical damages to the building, disturbances, antisocial behaviour) or from a unilateral decision of the landlord. In any case, both the degree of acceptance of certain kind of

behaviours and the extent to which a landlord can get rid of a tenant, regardless of its behaviour, depend on the legal and institutional framework. All the other risk factors pertaining to the housing dimension are classified as structural or institutional. The risk factors pertaining to the social dimension are almost equally distributed among the individual/structural axis. This complex, and not exhaustive, interplay of factors has to be kept in mind when describing the phenomenon of homelessness and imagining possible policy responses. Despite this theoretical recognition of homelessness as being the outcome of a combination of social and housing causes, it has been traditionally treated as a matter of social policy in most European countries. This policy choice has a great deal of consequences, among which: housing is not considered as a solution; the homeless people are supposed to solve their individual problems (e.g. related to mental health and/or addiction) before having access to housing (this approach has promoted the diffusion of the so-called staircase model, see chapter two); being homeless is not a sufficient condition per se to gain access to social housing. Homelessness services are therefore unbalanced towards the treatment of individual risk factors pertaining to the social dimension. This research focuses instead on the housing dimension, with a specific interest on how structural and institutional risk factors are and may be limited through Housing First. This new approach to address homelessness, extensively described in chapter two, strongly challenges indeed the traditional socially-oriented approach: providing their beneficiaries with a stable private home, it gives back centrality to housing as the primary dimension of homelessness. It does so on an individual basis, but it can also have an impact on the structural level. The assessment of this impact, which is a purpose of this work, is needed to have a better insight on the relationship between homelessness and the housing field. There is more: the original Housing First model is targeted to homeless people mainly suffering from individual problems related to the social dimension (i.e. mental health problems and substance abuse). European initiatives referring to the Housing First model have adapted it to the contexts where they have been implemented, redefining the boundaries of Housing First's scope to embrace, at least in some cases, a broader idea of homelessness, which includes people recognised as homeless mainly because of structural and institutional reasons. An assessment of the extent to which Housing First can be arranged to meet such a broad conception of homelessness and under which conditions is another purpose of this work.



## **1.2 Measuring and treating homelessness: a statistical and policy review**

Once homelessness has been defined, the following steps are its measurement and treatment. The extent and treatment of homelessness is described for the five countries where the case studies selected for this research are located: Austria, Hungary, Italy, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Before discussing numbers and other relevant information in details, two forewords are necessary. First, homelessness can be observed adopting a positivist or a constructivist lens (Jacobs et al., 1999). In the positivist paradigm, homelessness is an objective phenomena naturally observable in society, whose existence and prominence as a social problem is taken for granted. In the constructivist paradigm, homelessness as a social problem does not exist per se in society, but is formed by the power of identifiable groups in society struggling to define a certain issue as a problem (or not). If, at a certain point, a group is able to define homelessness as a problem, it starts to be treated as a social problem to be addressed by specific social policy. Public and private organisations to deal with the problem are created, a system addressing homelessness starts to function and the existence of homelessness as a social problem becomes taken for granted. Following the constructivist approach, we can distinguish two major ideological perspectives. The minimalist definition considers homelessness as the consequence of individual frailties (vagrancy, alcoholism, mental illness, unwillingness to work), while the structuralist definition defines it as the outcome of structural conditions related to the way welfare state, housing and labour market are organised (Stephens et al., 2010; Edgar et al., 2002; Jacobs et al., 1999). Governments tend to adopt a minimalistic perspective, in order to minimise the extent of homelessness and the need for broad welfare and housing measures. They usually include in the definition of homelessness only people living on the streets and in emergency or special shelters, that is roofless and houseless people in the ETHOS definition. Organisations interested in the issue of homelessness try to impose on the policy agenda a broader structural definition of homelessness, including situations of housing exclusion, that is the categories of insecure and inadequate housing in the ETHOS definition. The main pragmatic result of this ideological struggle is that the available data on homelessness lack of comparability, and in some cases also of reliability. A second foreword regards how statistics and policy strategies are presented in the following sections. Both numbers and policies are in ambiguous relationship with welfare regimes as theorised by Esping-Andersen (1990; 1999). Some scholars argue that different welfare regimes shape the scale and pattern of homelessness (Fitzpatrick and Stephens, 2007), that homelessness is generated by the failure of welfare (and housing)

regimes to provide adequate services (Edgar et al., 1999), and that responses to homelessness and outcomes for homeless people vary by welfare regimes (Stephens et al., 2010). As for levels of homelessness, it is difficult to concretely evaluate the relationship with welfare regimes, because of lack of detailed, robust and comparable data on homelessness. As for homelessness policies, their effective relationship with welfare regimes is under discussion: the configurations of different welfare regimes is considered as a factor determining the emergence or not of national strategies and the territorial organisation of services regulation, financing and provision. However, they do not seem reliable predictors of the types of homelessness services provided and of the adopted approaches. For these reasons, the literature on welfare regimes remains in the very background of this analysis, and does not explicitly drive the country comparison.

### ***1.2.1 The extent of homelessness in five European countries***

As anticipated, the measurement of homelessness is a long-term controversial issue, involving the scientific community, international agencies, national and local governments, civil society and public opinion. What should it be measured? And how? These two questions found so many answers that the only certainty is that one single number will never be enough to understand homelessness (Busch-Geertsema, 2010). For this reason, we provide information (when available) on numbers, and we shortly discuss the issue of comparability.

**Table 1.2.** Numbers and trends of homelessness in five selected EU countries.

<b>Country</b>	<b>Number of homeless people</b>	<b>Percentage of the population</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Trend</b>
Austria	37,000	0.45	2006	Increase
Hungary	10,459	0.1	2014	Increase (+6.8% on 2013)
Italy	50,724	0.24	2014	Increase (+ 6.5% on 2011)
Sweden	34,000	0.36	2011	Increase (+29% on 2005)
England	53,410	0.1	2014	Increase (+26% on 2010)

*Sources: BAWO, 2009 (Austria); Busch-Geertsema et al., 2014 (Hungary); Istat, 2014 (Italy); NBHW, 2011 (Sweden); Government of the UK, Department for Communities and Local Government, Homelessness Statistics<sup>6</sup> (England)*

These data are definitely not comparable, since they were collected by different agencies, with different methods and following different definitions of homelessness. Most European countries have no official or coordinated sources for data collection on homelessness. Some

<sup>6</sup> Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/homelessness-statistics>

countries, e.g. Austria, lack of a national approach to data collection, which is only taken in charge by some regions. Austrian survey has been conducted by BAWO, a national umbrella organisation representing the interests of non-profit organisation working with the homeless. The Italian survey has been conducted by the National Institute for Statistics on behalf of a national umbrella organisation, which decided on sources and criteria for data collection in absence of a national official approach. The Hungarian survey is organised and carried out by service providers and is based on a one-off count made every 3<sup>rd</sup> of February. Officially established data are only available for England (not for the UK) and Sweden. In some cases, the homeless people are actually the persons using some services addressed to homeless people, like night shelters and canteen (e.g. in Italy), thus excluding people not using these services and other people using other services but not the ones included in the counting. Some researches consider users of a broader range of services, including for instance users of services aimed at preventing evictions, e.g. in Austria. Other countries draw on the official data of people accepted as homeless by public authorities according to specific laws (e.g. in England). The most comprehensive survey is the Swedish one, based on a preliminary map of public and private organisations in contact with homeless people in every municipality, which were then asked to fill in a standardised questionnaire providing information on their users. A number of different definitions of homelessness are set by different surveys to define who should be included in the count. A common matrix to interpret the data is the ETHOS typology of homelessness discussed in the first section of this chapter. Although not all European governments agree on all categories as being part of the homeless population, in most cases official and not official definitions are set in relation to ETHOS, and it can be identified which of the categories are included in the national definitions of homelessness and which are not (Busch-Geertsema, 2010). The latter is however just an analytical exercise, since ETHOS still stands in the very background, and data are not collected to fill in its categories. For reasons of simplicity, Busch-Geertsema et al. (2014) report a specialist version of the ETHOS typology for use in statistical research. The typology, known as ETHOS Light, is reported in Table 1.3, and will be used to compare national data on homelessness.

**Table 1.3.** ETHOS Light typology and national statistics.

	<b>Operational Category</b>	<b>Living Situation</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Countries</b>
1	People living rough	Public /external spaces	Living in the streets or public spaces without a shelter that can be defined as living quarters	AT, SE, EN, IT, HU
2	People in emergency accommodation	Overnight shelters	People with no place of usual residence who move frequently between various types of accommodation	AT, SE, EN, IT, HU
3	People living in accommodation for the homeless	Homeless hostels Temporary accommodation Transitional supported accommodation Women's shelter or refuge accommodation	Where the period of stay is time-limited and no long-term housing is provided	AT, SE, EN, IT, HU
4	People living in institutions	Health care institutions Penal institutions	Stay longer than needed due to lack of housing , no housing available prior to release	SE
5	People living in non-conventional dwellings due to lack of housing	Mobile homes Non-conventional buildings Temporary structures	Where the accommodation is used due to a lack of housing and is not the person's usual residence	AT, SE, HU
6	People living temporarily in conventional housing with family and friends due to lack of housing	Conventional housing, but not the person's usual place or residence	Where the accommodation is used due to a lack of housing and is not the person's usual residence	AT, SE, partially EN

*Source: Busch-Geertsema et al., 2014, p. 22.*

Categories 1, 2 and 3, constituting the so-called primary homelessness and corresponding to roofless and houseless people in the extended ETHOS typology, are universally included in the definition of homelessness. In some cases they are counted as a group (e.g. in Italy), in others, despite being included, rough sleepers are not separately counted (e.g. in Austria), in others groups 2 and 3 are merged (e.g. in Hungary and England), while only in Sweden the three groups are counted separately. People living in women's shelter and refuge accommodation in category 3 are usually not included in the counts, since these services are not defined as homelessness services. People living in institutions (category 4) are included only in the Swedish count, although the difficulty in determining who might and might not become homeless after leaving the institutions makes this data inevitably rough. Category 5 is

included in most surveys, although in no case they are separately counted. In Hungary people in non-conventional housing are considered as rough sleepers, in Austria they are mixed with people from category 6 (and, in any case, they are counted only if they are registered at the services included in the survey), in Sweden they are included but not separately counted, in England they are explicitly excluded, in Italy they are theoretically excluded, but some (many?) of them could be actually included, if they are users of the services included in the count. As for category 6, people living temporarily in conventional housing are included, and separately counted, only in Sweden. In Austria they are mixed with people from category 5, in England they are partially included (it depends on single cases), in Hungary and Italy they are excluded, although in Italy some of them could be users of homelessness services, and therefore be incidentally included but counted within primary homelessness. In the Swedish and English surveys some groups not included within the ETHOS Light typology are defined as homeless, i.e. people living in dwellings let through social services in Sweden (13,900 people) and residents in the unregulated private sector in England. As apparent from this short overview and with the partial exception of Sweden, data on homelessness have a low reliability and are collected from a service-oriented perspective, thus excluding people not in contact with services and mixing categories sometimes wittingly but, in many cases, quite randomly. How many secondary homeless are actually included in the Italian data on primary homelessness? How should we categorise the 20,000 English homeless people not included in any of the six categories? Are they all residents of accommodation let through unregulated market? And the more than 30,000 not explicitly attributable to any category in the Austrian count? Considering these relevant methodological criticalities, table 1.4 reports the available numbers on homeless people pertaining to the ETHOS Light categories in the five countries.

**Table 1.4.** Homeless people per ETHOS Light category in five selected EU countries.

Country	Primary homelessness				Secondary homelessness			
	1	2	3	Total	4	5	6	Total
Austria	No data	1,149	3,740	4,889	No data	2,668		2,668
Hungary	3,231	7,228		10,459	No data	No data	No data	/
Italy	No data	No data	No data	50,724	No data	No data	No data	/
Sweden	280	1,100	5,130	6,510	2,410	No data	6,800	9,210
England	2,744	32,970		35,714	No data	No data	No data	/

*Sources: BAWO, 2009 (Austria); Busch-Geertsema et al., 2014 (Hungary); Istat, 2014 (Italy); NBHW, 2011 (Sweden); Government of the UK, Department for Communities and Local Government, Homelessness Statistics<sup>7</sup> (England)*

<sup>7</sup> Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/homelessness-statistics>

Drawing on the framework provided by the ETHOS Light typology and considering the methodological weaknesses of the single surveys and of the comparative effort, we provide a synthetic comparative table considering only groups included within the ETHOS Light typology.

**Table 1.5.** Number of homeless people in a comparative perspective based on the ETHOS Light typology.

Country	Number of homeless people	Primary homeless	Secondary homeless	Percentage of the population	Year
Austria	7,567	4,899	2,668	0.09	2006
Hungary	10,459	10,459	0	0.1	2014
Italy	50,724	50,724	0	0.24	2014
Sweden	15,720	6,510	9,210	0.17	2011
England	35,714	35,714	0	0.06	2014

*Sources: BAWO, 2009 (Austria); Busch-Geertsema et al., 2014 (Hungary); Istat, 2014 (Italy); NBHW, 2011 (Sweden); Government of the UK, Department for Communities and Local Government, Homelessness Statistics<sup>8</sup> (England)*

Italy has both the highest number and the highest share of homeless people on total population. However, as aforementioned, too many shortcomings undermine the validity of this statement. Austrian data are the oldest and the most unreliable: on the total reported number of 37,000 people using services for homeless people in 2006, it is impossible to categorise most of them (around 29,000) in one of the ETHOS Light groups, because of lack of information. As a consequence, the share on the total population drops from 0.45 per cent to 0.09 per cent but it is probably very much underestimated. The Hungarian survey does not include the secondary homeless (except for a quota of people living in non-conventional housing) since the beginning. The English survey only considers statutory homelessness, thus excluding homeless people not falling into under the circumstances of the Housing Act<sup>9</sup>. One could conclude that Italy and Sweden have the worst numbers because they made the best counts. As for the demographic composition of homelessness, some data are available on gender, age groups and ethnic background of homeless people.

<sup>8</sup> Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/homelessness-statistics>

<sup>9</sup> Fitzpatrick et al. (2014) estimates that the number of homeless people would rise to 185,000 people (0.33 per cent of the population) if including non-statutory homelessness.

**Table 1.6.** Gender, age and ethnic composition of homelessness in five selected EU countries.

Country	Gender		Age group				Ethnic composition	
	Men	Women	0-18	18-29	30-49	50+	National	Foreign
Austria	75%	25%	7%	27%	47%	19%	70%	30%
Hungary	79%	21%	1%	6%	41%	52%	No data	
Italy	85.7%	14.3%	0%	25.7%	50.1%	24.3%	41.9%	58.2%
Sweden	64%	36%	1%	21%	73%	5%	66%	34%
England	58%	42%	0%	25%	57%	18%	60%	40%

*Sources: BAWO, 2009 (Austria); Busch-Geertsema et al., 2014 (Hungary); Istat, 2014 (Italy); NBHW, 2011 (Sweden); Government of the UK, Department for Communities and Local Government, Homelessness Statistics<sup>10</sup> (England)*

Homeless people are everywhere mainly men aged 30 to 49, with the exception of Hungary, where there is a substantial representation of people aged over 50. As for the ethnic background, nationals are prevalent everywhere but not in Italy, where foreign people are the most numerous group. Some surveys provide further information on the characteristics of homeless people, such as household composition, sources of income and support needs. However, data are highly fragmented and more detailed information will be provided on every country, when available, in chapter three. Broadly speaking, the majority of homeless people are unemployed and their main sources of income are wages (although generally occasional and low), social benefits, pensions and support from family and friends. Substance abuse is reported in 30 to 40 per cent of the cases, mental illness in 30 to 40 per cent of the cases, physical disability in 25 to 40 per cent of the cases.

### ***1.2.2 Homelessness policies and services in five European countries***

As already mentioned, homelessness has been traditionally treated as a matter of social policy. Furthermore, the provision of services to homeless people is almost everywhere a local concern and involves a mix of public and private non-profit actors. Some European countries (mainly Northern and Central countries) frame these local services within a national homelessness strategy, while others (mainly in Southern and Eastern Europe) present a highly fragmented situation where services are provided locally in absence of specific national strategies. National strategies across Europe have a common concern for reducing the use of temporary accommodation, shortening the length of stays in shelters, providing long-term accommodation, offering individualised services (Benjaminsen and Dyb, 2010). They are mainly centred on the staircase approach, in which homeless people move through a series of

<sup>10</sup> Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/homelessness-statistics>

services until they are ready to live independently, with a housing-led approach that involves assisting homeless people to move into permanent housing as quickly as possible and providing appropriate support services in their homes (Benjaminsen and Dyb, 2010; Busch-Geertsema et al., 2010). Both approaches will be extensively described in chapter two. The configurations of different welfare regimes (Esping-Andersen, 1999; 1990) play a role in determining the emergence or not of national strategies and the territorial organisation of services coordination, financing and provision. However, they do not seem reliable predictors of the types of homeless services provided and of the adopted approaches (Busch-Geertsema, 2010).

**Table 1.7.** Homelessness strategies in five selected EU countries.

Country	National strategy	Main policy sector	Main approach
Austria	No	Social	Staircase
Hungary	No	Social	Staircase
Italy	No (in construction)	Social	Staircase
Sweden	Yes (not updated)	Social	Staircase
England	Yes	Social/housing	Staircase/housing led

*Sources: Busch-Geertsema et al., 2010; Anderson, 2010; Benjaminsen and Dyb, 2010; FEANTSA, National Homelessness Strategies database<sup>11</sup>*

In Austria there is no national homelessness strategy. An integrated programme on homelessness has been adopted in Vienna, and will be described in chapter three. In Italy a text establishing national guidelines for tackling homelessness, which defines criteria and quality standards for service provision to homeless people, has been issued in 2015 by the central government, in collaboration with regions and the national umbrella organisation representing third sector organisations working with the homeless. The text commits both the central state and the regions to the establishment and implementation of actions to prevent and combat severe poverty and homelessness based on the guidelines. In Sweden a national strategy was adopted for the period 2007-2009 but has not been updated; regional strategies have been introduced in Stockholm and Gothenburg. The social sector is the main policy sector addressing homelessness everywhere. In addition, social policy addressing homelessness and social housing policy are often being developed in at least some degree of isolation from one another (Pleace et al., 2011). Social housing has its own set of policy goals, as does the social policy. Only in England the idea of homelessness is explicitly connected to people deprived of the right to access a house, and therefore a formal role is recognised to

<sup>11</sup> Available at: <http://feantsa.org/spip.php?rubrique143&lang=en>



housing policies, especially for some priority groups who should be housed when experiencing homelessness, like households with dependent children and disabled people. The staircase approach is dominant everywhere, with the partial exception of England, where a housing-led approach is adopted at the national level. The differences between staircase and housing-led approaches will be described in chapter two. As for the organisation of homelessness services, Table 1.8 provides a framework in the five selected countries.

**Table 1.8.** Homelessness services in five selected EU countries.

Country	Regulation	Financing	Provision	Main providers
Austria	Regional	Regional	Regional/municipal	NGOs
Hungary	National	National	Municipal	NGOs
Italy	Regional/municipal	Regional	Municipal	Municipalities/NGOs
Sweden	National	Municipal	Municipal	Municipalities
England	National/municipal	National/municipal	Municipal	NGOs

*Sources: Busch-Geertsema et al., 2010; Anderson, 2010; Benjaminsen and Dyb, 2010; FEANTSA, National Homelessness Strategies database<sup>12</sup>*

Homelessness services are mainly a regional and local competence. They are entirely regulated, financed and provided locally in Austria and Italy, where the regional level is in charge of planning, regulating and financing service, with the municipal level in charge of their provision. In Sweden and England, services are planned and regulated at the national level and are mainly financed and delivered at the municipal level. In Hungary the national level is also the main funder, with the local level being only in charge of the services delivery. While the importance of local government responsibility is emphasised everywhere, the division of responsibility among different levels and actors partially reflect the different institutional settings across different countries and welfare regimes. In Scandinavian countries, like Sweden, the key players are municipalities, while in Anglo-Saxon and Corporatist countries NGOs play a major role. They are mainly involved in the services provision, but in some localities they also participate in the services design and funding. Among NGOs, faith-based organisations play a strong role everywhere, while the private for profit sector is practically not involved at all. Beyond ordinary national, regional or municipal budgets, funding can also come by EU funding (especially the European Social Fund programme) or by national or local exceptional measures. Funding arrangements usually include: the payment for amount of service hours, the payment for number of users, grants, donations

<sup>12</sup> Available at: <http://feantsa.org/spip.php?rubrique143&lang=en>

(Busch-Geertsema et al., 2010). As for the main services provided, we refer to the following typology of services for homeless people.

**Table 1.9.** Typology of services for homeless people and those in immediate risk of homelessness.

Service type	Examples
Preventative services	Housing advice, mediation in cases of domestic conflicts, rent arrears, risk of evictions
Emergency accommodation for roofless persons	Emergency shelters targeted at people living rough
Temporary accommodation for houseless persons	Temporary hostels, transitional housing, shelters for victims of domestic violence
Supported housing	Shelter plus social support, training apartments usually requiring compliance with treatment services and codes
Housing led services	Ordinary housing plus social support, including Housing First services
Non-residential services for homeless and formerly homeless persons	Outreach services, day centres, advice services, health services, mobile food services, floating support for ex-homeless persons in permanent housing
Accommodation for other client groups that may be used by homeless people	Hotels, bed and breakfast, specialist support and residential care services for people with alcohol, drug or mental health problems
Mainstream services that may be used by homeless people	Advice services, municipal services, health and social care services, welfare payment services
Specialist support services that may be used by homeless people	Psychiatric counselling services, drug detoxification facilities, services for former offenders, employment services

*Sources: Our elaboration from FEANTSA, 2015, pp. 17-18; Busch-Geertsema et al., 2010, p.44.*

Emergency and temporary accommodation services are diffused everywhere, and in some cases (e.g. Hungary) they represent almost the only homelessness service. Non-residential basic support services, like day centres, canteens and showers, and in some cases mobile services, are also an important element of service provision in all countries. Other mainstream services, like general health and social care services, are available also to homeless people, at least in theory. Specialist services include services focusing on specific target groups (women, young people, elderly people, families, mentally ill people, people with substance abuse problems) and on specific areas (education, employment and training, financial affairs, accommodation, health). They are particularly diffused in England, but are gaining importance almost everywhere. This increasing specialisation requires a growing inter-agency work, also to prevent the increase of barriers for accessing services. Preventative services are present almost everywhere, but their diffusion and efficacy is particularly relevant in Austria and England. A common concern regards access to services, which is increasingly dependent on referrals from other services, specific eligibility criteria and strict local connection rules

(Anderson, 2010; FEANTSA, 2015). Local connection rules are rules allowing only people who are resident in a particular locality (e.g. municipality or region) to access services provided by local governments. Their diffusion is pretty much out of control, since each regional and local authority tends to adopt its own rules, thus resulting in a “geographical lottery effect” (FEANTSA, 2015, p. 56) where access to services may be dependent on being homeless in the ‘right’ place. Local connection rules apply to all type of services, so that homeless people not able to demonstrate their stable residence in a locality may be denied access to emergency accommodation (e.g. in some municipalities in Italy and England), supported housing (almost everywhere) and housing-led services (e.g. in some municipalities in Italy and England) (FEANTSA, 2015). Local connection rules mainly impact on the most vulnerable homeless people, who live on the streets and are those who find it hardest to demonstrate a local connection.

It is difficult to draw conclusions from this short overview on homelessness policies in the five countries of the research. England appears as the most favourable context for the development of Housing First, having developed a continuously updated national strategy, an integration between social and housing policy, a housing-led approach which has fostered the establishment of locally rooted Housing First initiatives, and advanced preventative and specialist services. Nonetheless, England is also one of the countries where homelessness is most perceived as an increasingly severe problem (see chapter three). In all the other countries, homelessness is addressed as a matter of social policy and following the traditional staircase approach, with small-scale fragmented local initiatives experimenting the Housing First model. In Hungary homelessness policies are mainly based on provision of very basic support and Housing First is limited to very few small-scale local projects. Recent developments in Italian public policies on homelessness are addressing the issues of national coordination and innovation of services (towards prevention and housing-led approaches), although the situation remains fragmented and underfunded. Austria combines advanced preventative services with a surprising lack of national commitment with data collection and strategic planning. In Sweden the well-known generosity of the welfare state also reflects on the extent of services provided to homeless people, however the government has not updated its national strategy since 2007 and, differently from other Nordic countries (Denmark, Norway and Finland), the diffusion of housing-led approaches and Housing First initiatives has been limited, due to the existence of strong interests promoting the staircase approach. In any case, it is worth noting that the local level can present considerable variations. The local level has

gained momentum as the privileged locus of policy and intervention in many countries since the late 1970s and, more substantially, since the 1990s, as a consequence of the general trends towards decentralisation and territorialisation of welfare policies, inspired by the principle of subsidiarity (Kazepov, 2008; 2010). In line with these processes, as shown in Table 1.17, the delivery and, in some cases, the funding of homelessness services is the responsibility of local or regional authorities in a large number of states. Local configurations of welfare and housing systems are therefore sometimes more relevant than broad macro patterns in shaping the way homelessness services are provided. For these reasons, in chapter three the case studies are framed within local patterns of homelessness and structures of opportunities and limits provided by the local configuration of welfare and housing systems.

### **1.3 The link between homelessness and housing systems: a comparative overview**

Housing, intended both as “the buildings that people live in”<sup>13</sup> and “the job of providing houses for people to live in”<sup>14</sup> has a clear connection with homelessness. As aforementioned, this connection has been for a long time neglected, or at least understated, in both the research and action on homelessness in Europe, which has been traditionally treated as a matter of social policy. Housing was considered as something accessible by the great majority of the society, and some people were labelled as homeless because of some kind of personal and relational problems. The development of the ETHOS definition has given a relevant contribution in recognising housing vulnerability as an important driver of homelessness. This renewed attention towards the housing dimension of homelessness stems from the pivotal work of Edgar et al. (2002), who managed to firmly introduce in the debate on homelessness the broader concept of housing vulnerability, defined as “a condition of those who are denied access to adequate housing through the established channels of provision, that is the market and the state” (p. 7). In Edgar et al.’s theoretical framework, housing vulnerability is an inherent condition of homelessness and it characterises all people falling in the ETHOS categories. This theorisation reverses the dominant perspective: people are homeless not because of a personal failure but because of a structural failure, of both the (housing) market and the state, in terms of housing and welfare policies. According to their analysis, housing vulnerability in Europe has increased since late 1970s because of structural reasons connected to the marketisation of housing and the retrenchment of the state in the housing sector. The

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<sup>13</sup> Collins Cobuild. *Essential English Dictionary*, HarperCollins Publishers, London, 1988.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*.

increasingly dominant role of the market sphere in housing provision causes housing vulnerability because it leads to the increased importance of labour income in accessing and maintaining housing (Edgar et al., 2002). The trend towards marketisation of housing includes different facets: the policy preference for home ownership; the decline of the rental sector, particularly of the social housing sector; the deregulation of housing finance markets; the increasing market orientation of social housing providers. These changes in the structure of the housing markets and in orientations of housing policies have been explained by two theoretical approaches in the literature on comparative housing regimes. According to the convergence school, the dynamics of the capitalist economy are the main driver of change in housing systems. The current system characterised by mass home ownership and a residual social housing sector targeted on disadvantaged groups is feasible to post-Fordism, as far as the mass social housing provision was feasible to Fordism (Harloe, 1985; 1975; Castells, 1977). On the contrary, the divergence approach highlights the differences between housing systems and identifies two main housing regimes. The dual housing regime is characterised by a policy oriented towards home ownership, an unregulated and unsubsidised private rental market, and a residual social rental sector targeted on disadvantaged groups. Italy and the UK are examples of this housing regime. The unitary housing system is instead characterised by a tenure-neutral housing policy, a highly regulated and subsidised private sector that competes on equal terms on the same market with public social housing, which is not strictly allocated on the basis of means. Sweden and Austria are two examples of countries pertaining to this group (Kemeny, 2006; 2001; 1995; Kemeny and Lowe, 1998). Both approaches are in a sense valid. If we focus on similarities, there is indeed a certain convergence towards a policy preference for home ownership in most European countries since the 1990s (Elsinga, 2015). The idea behind the preference for home ownership is that it can be considered as a private safety net alternative to collective welfare arrangements. Indeed, both Castles (1988) and Kemeny (1992) found a correlation between the share of home ownership and expenditure on welfare: the higher the rate of home ownership, the lower the welfare expenditure. While recognising the existence of convergent trends, if we take a closer look to the national housing systems, we find out that Kemeny's typology maintains a certain validity in explaining the differences between assets, structures and outcome of the housing systems. For this reason, we use Kemeny's typology as a referencing framework within which to analyse the similarities and differences among the five selected European countries. Hungary was not considered by Kemeny's analysis. For many reasons, however, it can be classified in the cluster of countries informed by a dual housing regime being characterised by a policy clearly

oriented towards home ownership, an unregulated and unsubsidised private rental market, and a residual social rental sector targeted on disadvantaged groups. Data on housing systems in the five countries and their relationship with homelessness are presented by referring to three aspects which are crucial for Housing First, as it will be more evident in chapter two: housing availability, housing affordability, and tenure security.

### ***1.3.1 Homelessness and housing availability in five European countries***

Housing availability basically refers to the number of available houses in a defined territory and, most relevantly for the purposes of this research, their partition according to tenure types, an information otherwise known as the structure of the housing market. Table 1.10 sums up the structure of the housing market of the five selected countries, by showing the extent of different housing sectors as a percentage of the total housing stock. Reliable data for all the five countries are available for the year 2011.

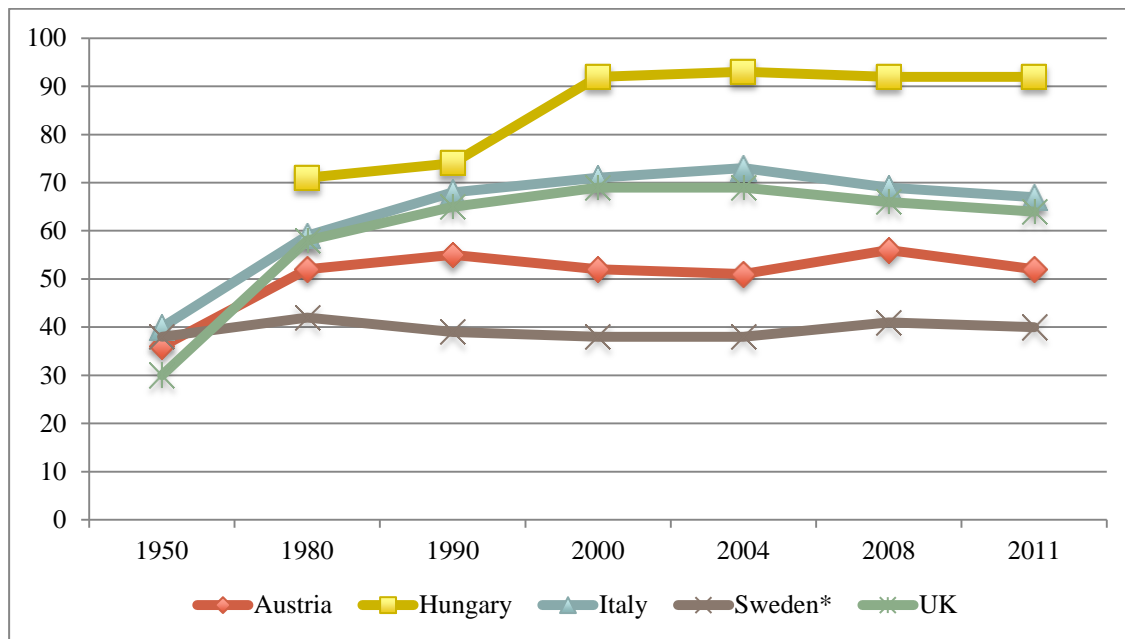
**Table 1.10.** Structure of the housing market in five selected EU countries, 2011.

<b>Housing regime</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Home Ownership</b>	<b>Private rental sector</b>	<b>Public/social sector</b>	<b>Other</b>
Unitary	Austria	52	20	20	8
	Sweden	62	19	19	-
Dual	Hungary	92	3	4	1
	Italy	67	16.5	5.5	11
	UK	64	18	18	-

*Sources: Pittini et al., 2015; Christophers, 2013; Federcasa, 2006.*

Consistent with Kemeny’s typology, housing markets of countries adopting a unitary housing regime are more balanced between home ownership and rental sectors, while dual housing systems are more unbalanced towards home ownership, with the exception of the UK. The data on home ownership in Sweden should be further split in “pure” home ownership, accounting for 40 per cent of the total housing stock, and tenant-ownership, which accounts for 22 per cent of the stock and is an hybrid tenure form between ownership and rent, where the tenant is owner of the right to live in a house without being owner of the physical building, owned by housing cooperatives. Data on the three sectors are now presented and commented in details, by also including the historical dimension. Figure 1.3 shows the historical trend of home ownership in the five countries.

**Figure 1.3.** Home ownership sector as a share of the total housing stock in five selected EU countries, 1950 – 2011.



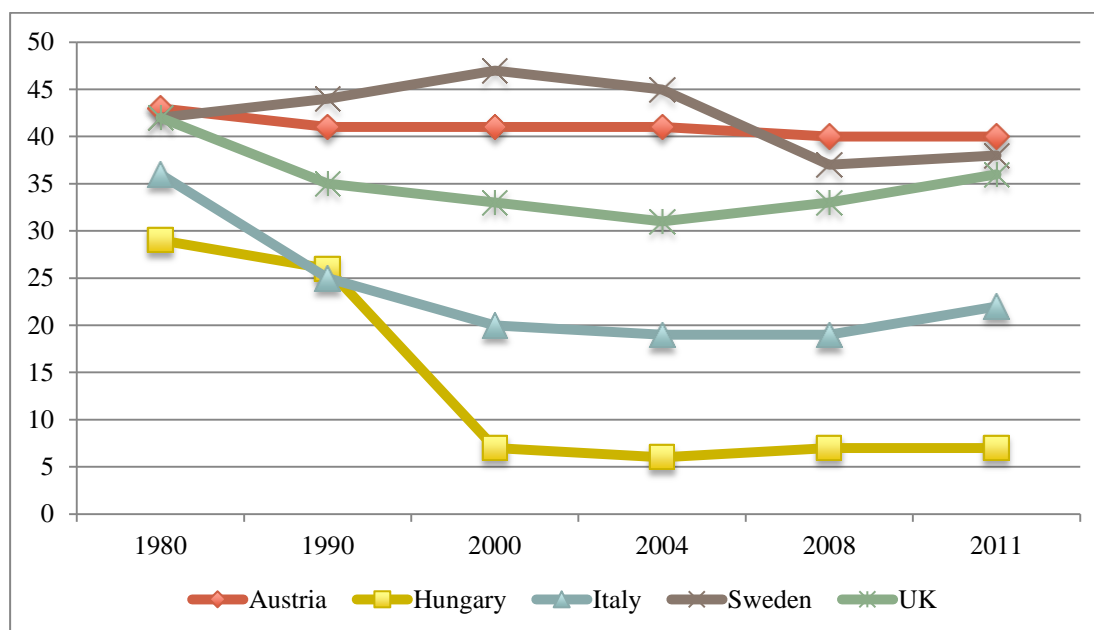
\* The data of Sweden do not include tenant ownership, a peculiar tenure form in which the tenant buys the right to live in a house by becoming a member of a housing cooperative. Tenant ownership accounts for around 20% of the market and is constantly increasing since 1980s.

Sources: Pittini et al., 2015; Pittini and Laino, 2011; Federcasa, 2006

Figure 1.3 shows a common trend towards the increase in the rate of home ownership in all the countries, which is consistent with the analysis of Edgar et al. (2002). Nevertheless, Austria and Sweden, characterised by a unitary housing system in Kemeny's typology, maintain a balanced housing market, where the rental sector still plays an important role. Home ownership is usually not considered as a realistic solution for homeless people, due to the high entrance costs. In most cases, policies promoting home ownership have instead indirect inconvenient effects for homeless people. First, they reduce the availability of rented houses that are normally more accessible for vulnerable households. Second, they drain public resources that could be used for welfare and housing measures for the most vulnerable.

The rental sector is in a more direct relationship with homelessness and, as described in chapter two, with Housing First. As a very general statement, we can observe that the smaller is the rental sector, the lower are the possibilities for vulnerable people to access to affordable housing (Edgar et al., 2002). A first analytical step is thus to have a glance on the extent of the rental sector in the selected European countries.

**Figure 1.4.** Rental sector as a share of the total housing stock in five selected EU countries, 1980 – 2011.



Sources: Pittini et al., 2015; Pittini and Laino, 2011; Federcasa, 2006

As evident from Figure 1.4, the rental sector has declined in all the five countries since the 1980s. However, the extent of the decline and, more important, the extent of the sector presents substantial national differences. The sharpest decline is in Hungary, followed by Italy, which are also the two countries where the rental sector is smaller. Sweden and Austria, characterised by a unitary housing system, have the larger rental sector, albeit the difference with the UK, pertaining to the group of countries with a dual housing system, is very small. In this sense, the difference has a more qualitative facet, in the composition of both the rental housing stock and the people living in the rental sector. Later on in this chapter we discuss the extent of the social rental sector, which is larger in Austria and Sweden more than in any other country. Furthermore, in Austria and Sweden the rental sector is considered as a viable alternative to home ownership and is not restricted to the lower levels of the housing market, as it is in Hungary, Italy and the UK (Elsinga, 2015). Despite a convergent tendency is ongoing, with Austria's and Sweden's rental sectors increasingly hosting the most vulnerable households (Elsinga, 2015; Holmqvist and Magnusson Turner, 2013), there is still a marked difference between these two countries and the other three.

A second statement regards more specifically social housing: the smaller is the social housing sector, the lower are the possibilities for vulnerable people to access to affordable housing. By social rented housing we mean housing allocated according to politically defined



needs, while market rented housing is allocated through the market (Bengtsson, 2001; Haffner et al., 2009). Usually, social housing is managed by public authorities and market housing by private landlords, but it is not always the case, as evident in Table 1.11, which also presents some of the main features of the social housing sector of the five countries.

**Table 1.11.** Main aspects of the social housing sector in five selected EU countries.

Housing regime	Country	Name	Target	Providers
Unitary	Austria	Social or subsidised housing	Low income and middle class households	Municipalities Housing associations Private companies
	Sweden	Public housing	All households	Municipal housing companies
Dual	Hungary	Municipal housing	Low income households	Municipalities
	Italy	Public housing	Low income households	Municipalities Private companies
	UK	Social or council housing	Low income households	Municipalities Housing associations Private companies

*Sources: Federcasa, 2006; Haffner et al., 2009; Pleace et al., 2011; Pittini and Laino, 2011; Reinprecht, 2014*

The most relevant difference between unitary and dual systems regards the target groups. In dual housing systems, social housing is targeted at low income households, whereas in unitary systems it addresses a larger part of the population. In Austria, while municipal social housing typically targeting the most vulnerable, social housing provided by housing associations is attractive also for middle class. In Sweden, a proper social housing sector does not exist, except for a small, albeit increasing, part of the housing stock reserved for social services. The public housing sector addresses all households, regardless of their income. Social housing providers operate at the local level in all countries. Municipalities are committed everywhere with the provision of social housing, directly or through municipal housing companies. Private non profit housing associations are important providers in Austria and the UK, and they usually house “less needy” households than municipal housing. There is a general tendency towards “bridging the gap” between social and market rented housing (Haffner et al., 2009), as regards housing providers: private landlords are increasingly providing social housing, although on a small scale, in Austria, Italy and the UK, while social landlords, including public authorities and companies and non profit associations, are becoming more market-oriented, at least in Austria, Sweden and the UK. Regardless of its specific contextual characteristics, social housing is widely recognised, in all housing systems,

as the most immediate way to accommodate vulnerable people. The first immediate concern is therefore about availability of socially rented dwellings. After the so-called “golden age” between the 1950s and the 1970s (Lévy-Vroelant et al., 2014), social housing has been shrinking since the 1980s, as shown in Figure 1.5.

**Figure 1.5.** Social housing as a share of the total housing stock in five selected EU countries, 1991 – 2011.



Sources: Pittini et al., 2015; Pittini and Laino, 2011; Czischke and Pittini, 2007; Federcasa, 2006

The social housing sector is particularly limited in Hungary and Italy, where it accounts for less than 7 per cent. It is larger in the countries with a unitary housing system (Austria and Sweden), and the UK, where it accounts for 18-20 per cent of the national housing stock. However, even in countries with larger stocks, the percentage of eligible households is normally far in excess of the percentage of social housing in the total stock. Scanlon et al. (2014) calculated that in Austria, for example, 80-90 per cent of the population would be eligible for social housing, due to high income ceilings. This mismatch implies that the states have to employ different rationing methods, like rankings, waiting lists and establishment of priorities among social groups competing for a scarce resource. As a result of these allocation mechanisms, some groups are overrepresented in socially rented houses, and others are excluded or have limited access. Broadly speaking, older people, single-parent families, immigrants and ethnic minorities tend to be overrepresented everywhere, while young people

and the most vulnerable groups (among which homeless people) tend to be underrepresented. Table 1.12 details the situation in the five selected countries.

**Table 1.12.** Main groups in social housing in five selected EU countries.

Country	Main groups in social housing
Austria	People in employment who can pay the rent; young families; older people
Hungary	Single-parent families; Roma people
Italy	Older people; single-parent families; households with disabled persons
Sweden	Single-parent families; older people
UK	Single-parent families; women at risk of violence; households with disabled persons; older people

Sources: Scanlon et al., 2014; fio.PSD, 2008; Pleace et al., 2011; Reinprecht, 2014; Scanlon et al., 2015

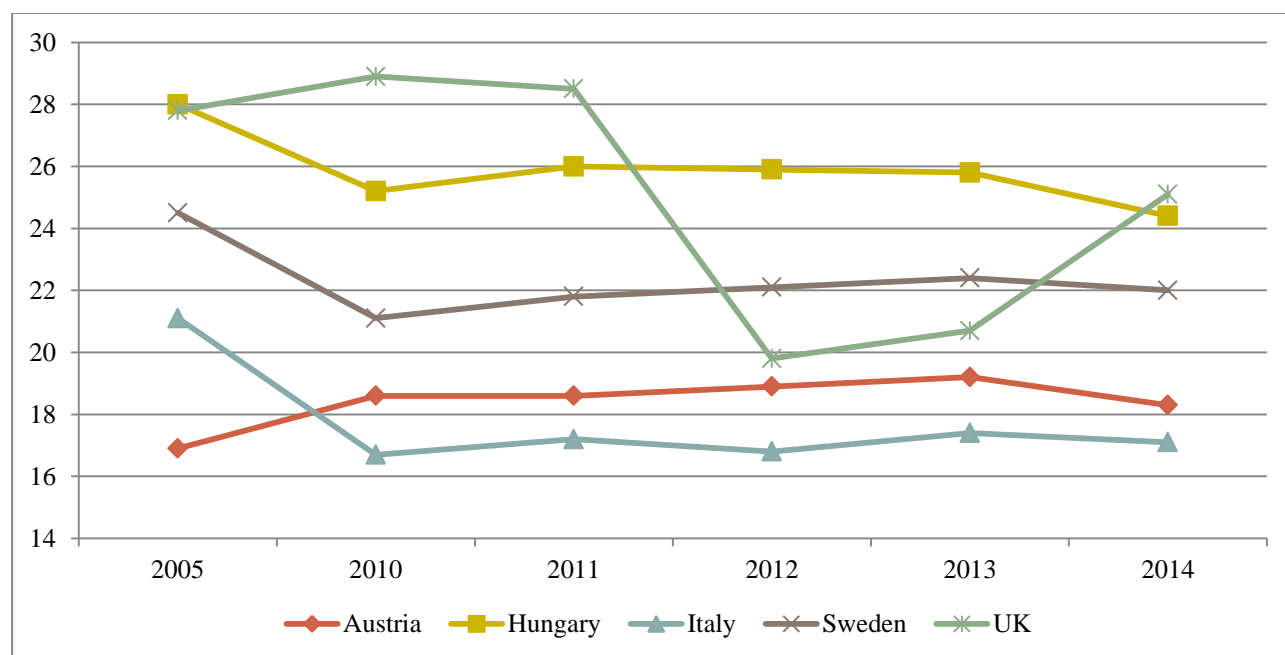
Social housing must respond to competing needs, with different groups in competition for a scarce resource, and homeless people's need are generally not met by social housing. Homeless people are not prioritised anywhere to access social housing, unless they also pertain to other groups, like disabled people or women at risk of violence. In most countries indeed, social housing is not actually considered as a tool to tackle homelessness, mainly for three reasons. First, social housing providers are increasingly business-oriented and are pushed to prioritise low risk tenants; homeless people are perceived as difficult tenants that would create high management costs. Second, barriers to access like not having a bad credit history or a criminal record are spread everywhere, and exclude *de facto* many homeless people. Third, in most countries there is a specific concern with promoting social mix and avoiding spatial concentration of poverty; homeless people are perceived as a potentially disruptive group for social cohesion in neighbourhoods (Pleace et al., 2011). Furthermore, in many localities local connection rules are a significant barrier to social housing for homeless people, especially for the most vulnerable, who are geographically mobile (FEANTSA, 2015). This framework is rather homogeneous across Europe, and it seems that no specific breaches or barriers to social housing for homeless people can be associated with particular welfare or housing regimes (Pleace et al., 2011).

### ***1.3.2 Homelessness and housing affordability in five European countries***

Beyond, and more then, availability, housing affordability is crucial in determining homelessness levels and shaping pathways in and out of homelessness. Housing affordability is the extent to which households are capable to access and maintain housing at affordable

costs. The concept is defined by using quantitative thresholds. According to the most common definition, housing is affordable when households spend less than 30 per cent of their disposable income to obtain and maintain an adequate house (Pittini, 2012). Another widely used indicator is the so-called housing cost overburden rate, which is the percentage of the population living in households where the total housing costs, net of housing allowances, represent more than 40 per cent of disposable income. According to the Eurostat definition<sup>15</sup>, housing costs include mortgage interest payments for owners or rent payment for tenants, utilities bills (water, electricity, gas and heating) and regular maintenance costs. Following this definition, we provide a picture of housing affordability in the five selected countries in Figures 1.6 to 1.9.

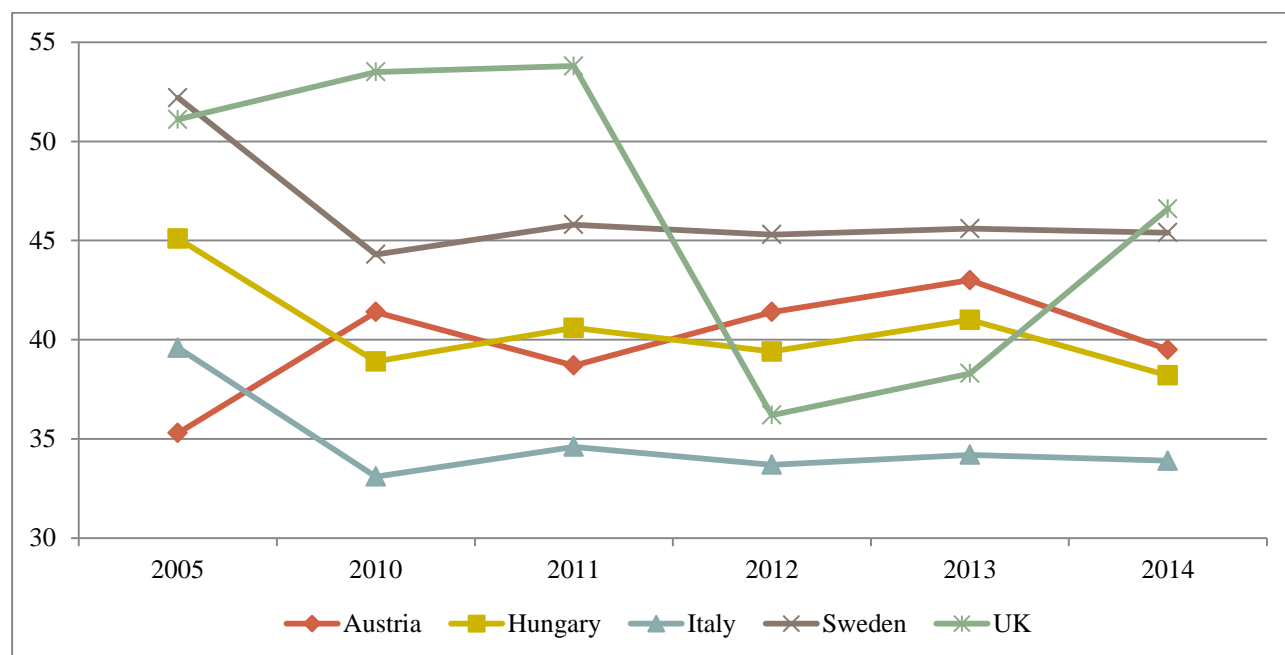
**Figure 1.6.** Share of housing costs as a percentage of disposable income in five selected EU countries, 2005 – 2014.



Source: Eurostat

<sup>15</sup> Eurostat, EU statistics on income and living conditions (EU-SILC).

**Figure 1.7.** Share of housing costs as a percentage of disposable income in five selected EU countries for people below the poverty line\*, 2005 – 2014.

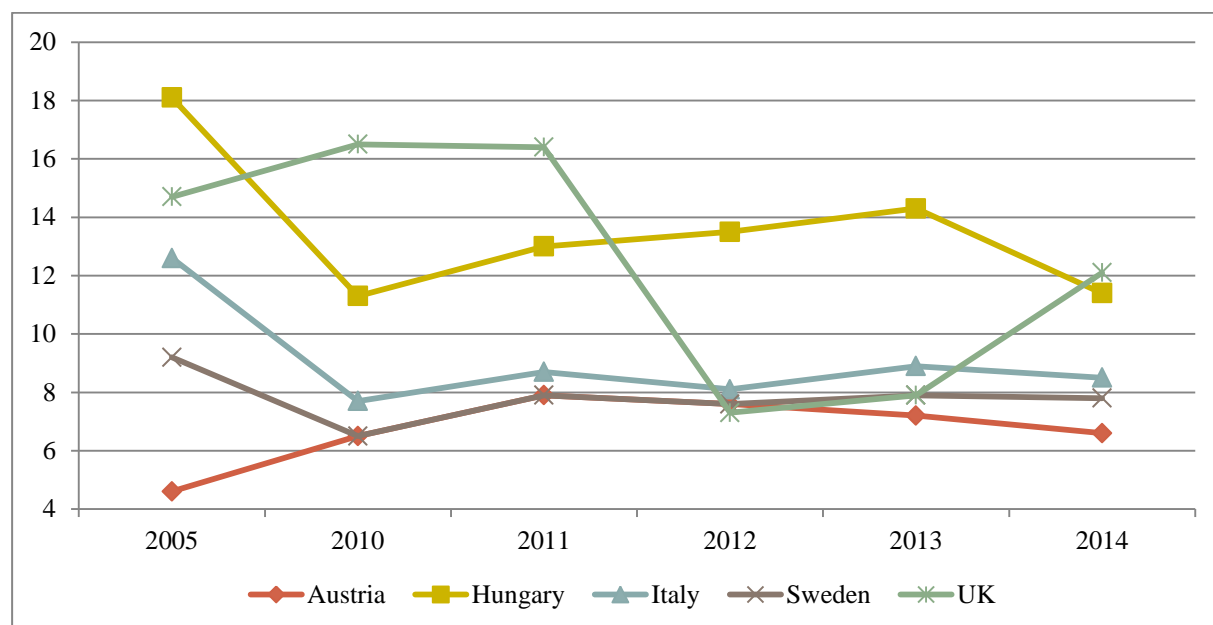


\* 60% of median equivalised income.

Source: Eurostat

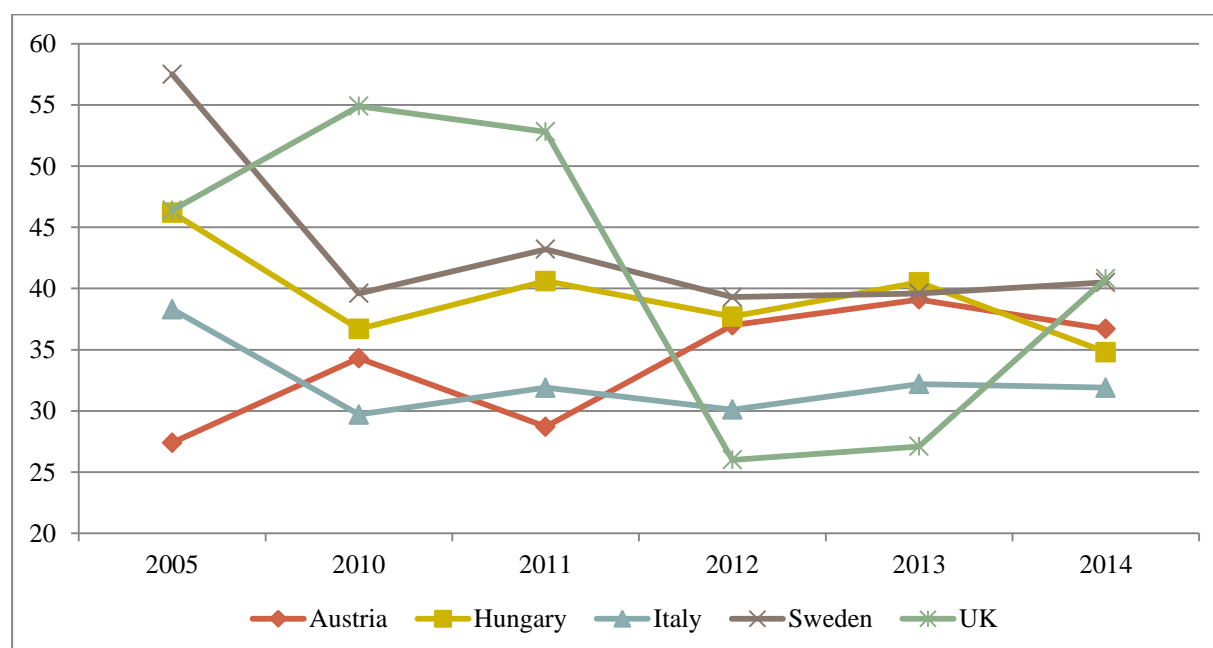
On average, households living in the five countries spend less than 30 per cent of their disposable income on housing, in a range that varies between 17.1 per cent (Italy) and 25.1 per cent (UK). Percentages increase significantly if we consider people living under the poverty threshold, with data that varies between 33.9 per cent (Italy) and 46.6 per cent (UK), and everywhere above the 30 per cent threshold. In the last ten years the trend is towards a convergence among the data of the five selected countries, both considering the total population and the population under the poverty line. The share of income spent on housing is increasing in Austria, and decreasing in Hungary, UK, Italy and Sweden. In UK and Sweden the share of income spent on housing by low income people is higher than the EU average.

**Figure 1.8.** Housing costs overburden rate as a percentage of population in five selected EU countries, 2005 – 2014.



Source: Eurostat

**Figure 1.9.** Housing costs overburden rate as a percentage of population among low income households in five selected EU countries, 2005 – 2014.



Source: Eurostat

On average 11.4 per cent of European households spend more than 40 per cent of their disposable income on housing. In the five countries this percentage ranges between 6.6 per cent (Austria) and 12.1 per cent (UK). The rate, again, increases significantly if we consider

people living under the poverty threshold, with data that varies between 31.9 per cent (Italy) and 40.8 per cent (UK). In the last ten years the trend is towards a convergence among the data of the five selected countries, both considering the total population and the population under the poverty line. The share of overburdened households is increasing in Austria, and decreasing in Hungary, UK, Italy and Sweden. Overburden is particularly relevant for households living in a privately rented house in Hungary, Italy and UK. In Hungary also home owners with mortgage are at risk of overburden.

**Table 1.13.** Housing affordability for low income households in five selected EU countries, synthesis.

Housing regime	Country	Share of income for housing, 2014	Trend 2005 – 2014*	Overburden rate, 2014	Trend 2005 – 2014*
Unitary	Austria	39.5	+	36.7	+
	Sweden	45.4	-	40.5	--
Dual	Hungary	38.2	-	34.8	--
	Italy	33.9	-	31.9	-
	UK	46.6	-+	40.8	-

\* ++ Increase of 10% or more; + Increase of 5 – 10%; +- Increase of 0-5%; -+ Decrease of 0-5%; - Decrease of 5-10%; -- Decrease of 10% or more

In absolute terms, problems with housing affordability for low income households are particularly evident in UK and Sweden. Considering trends, the situation is worsening in Austria and improving in Hungary, Sweden, Italy and UK. Within this general framework, there are high regional variations, with bigger cities usually presenting major affordability problems in all the countries.

Housing affordability is primarily affected by housing prices. In the rental sector, it is obviously an outcome of rent prices. The higher are rents, the lower are the possibilities for vulnerable people to access to affordable rented housing. Table 1.14 present an overview on rent levels and trends, and rent determination ratio in both the private and public rental sectors of the five countries.

**Table 1.14.** Private and public rent determination and levels, and trend in rent prices, in five selected EU countries, 2011.

Country	Private rented housing		Public rented housing		Private rents as % of social rents	Trend in rent prices 1996 - 2015
	Average annual rent (€/m <sup>2</sup> )	Rent determination	Average annual rent (€/m <sup>2</sup> )	Rent determination		
Austria	80.4	Cost-based	68.4	Cost-based	117	+85.9%
England	10,087*	Market rents	4,889*	Rents up to 80% of market	206	+73.6%
Hungary	28.3	Market rents	9.8	Set by local authorities	289	+137.7%
Italy	6,456*	Market rents and limited rents	1,262*	Income-based	511	+64.4%
Sweden	92	Based on public housing's rents	88	Collective bargaining	105	+45.2%

\* Entire dwelling

Sources: Scanlon et al. 2014, pp.7-9 (Austria, England, Hungary and Sweden); Britain's National Housing Federation, available at <http://goo.gl/GOr8QT> (Italy, figure on private rented housing); Federcasa, 2014 (Italy figure on public rented housing); Eurostat, Harmonized Index of Consumer Prices, retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, <https://goo.gl/8Uy2w5> (trend in rent prices 1996 – 2015)

Table 1.14 points out that average market rents are at the highest in England, followed by Sweden, Italy and Austria, and are at the lowest in Hungary. It also shows that market rents are increasing everywhere, spectacularly in Hungary but notably also in the other countries. High regional variations characterise all the countries, with the biggest cities usually featuring the highest rents. Detailed data will be presented in chapter three. Against this increasingly challenging market framework, the state can intervene by introducing mechanisms of rent setting and control. Many European countries have measures to regulate rent prices, but they generally have a limited impact (FEANTSA, 2008). Despite the theoretical recognition of housing as a social right in international treaties and national constitutions (Fitzpatrick and Watts, 2010), housing is indeed *de facto* considered as an economic good to be traded on the market (FEANTSA, 2008; Edgar et al., 2002). Austria and Sweden, the two countries with a unitary housing system, are partial exceptions. In Austria, rent regulation applies equally to the public and private sectors, so that rents in the two sectors are similar. In Sweden, through a corporatist mechanism where the National Union of Tenants plays an important role, public housing rents influence private rents, in a sense that the latter cannot exceed public rents more than a certain margin. The other countries presents a much higher difference in private and public rents.



Besides direct provision of social housing and rent regulation, the state can also intervene by providing low income households with financial support to access to privately and/or publicly rented housing. The amount of these housing allowances usually depends on the recipient's income, but cash ceilings are often established, so that they rarely cover all the rent. An overview on the use of housing allowances in the five countries is provided in table 1.15.

**Table 1.15.** Housing allowances in five selected EU countries, 1995 – 2013, Euros per inhabitant (at constant 2005 prices).

Housing regime	Country	1995	2000	2005	2010	2013	1995 - 2013
Unitary	Austria	18.37	29.50	36.98	50.34	35.14	+91.3%
	Sweden	273.50	182.54	176.28	160.28	171.18	-37.4%
Dual	Hungary	n.a.	38.40	45.55	45.11	27.37	-28.7%*
	Italy	2.19	1.16	2.86	7.42	6.24	+185%
	UK	390.73	376.63	438.55	445.95	460.74	+18%

\* 2000 – 2013

Source: Eurostat

The use of housing allowances as a public strategy to make access to rental housing more affordable does not appear to follow logically Kemeny's typology of housing regimes. Their extent is traditionally large in a dualistic country, UK, and in a unitary country, Sweden. The latter entered a dramatic phase of decrease in public investment in housing allowances since the 1990s. The other countries traditionally made a limited use of this policy tool, although it is encountering a growing interest in Italy and Austria. Generally speaking, however, housing allowances have proved to be more appropriate for mid-low income households than for the poorest ones, since they usually cover just part of the housing costs. Furthermore their effect on the market is controversial: they tend to sustain demand in the private rental sector, contributing to increase prices (FEANTSA, 2008).

Housing affordability is certainly not only a matter of housing arrangements. Two main variables interplay in determining affordability: housing costs and available income. The latter is affected by changes in the sources of income: labour wages, pensions or other social benefits. In this sense, not only housing but more general welfare policy affects housing affordability by supporting (or not) households' income, through minimum income schemes, unemployment benefits, pensions, other social benefits. Although this work deals with the housing dimension of homelessness, it is worth recalling that it is the interplay of housing, welfare and labour markets that decisively impact on housing affordability and homelessness (Teller, 2010; Stephens et al., 2010).

### 1.3.3 Homelessness and tenure security in five European countries

A feature of the housing systems that has a relevant impact on homelessness is the degree of tenancy protection granted to the tenants in the rental sector. In a question: once tenants get access to a privately or publicly rented dwelling, what extent of housing stability do they experience? Housing stability is very important for preventing the risk of homelessness, to the point that, as described in chapter two, it is the main purpose of the Housing First approach. It is out of the scope of this work to elaborate on the concept of housing stability, and on the different meanings it assumes in different contexts. It is a multifaceted construct that depends from different personal, social and structural dimensions (Frederick et al., 2014). Tenancy protection is just one of them, but it is of particular importance for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Important indicators of tenure security are the duration of the contract; the conditions to which a landlord can get rid of a tenant by unilaterally terminate a contract; the period of grace in case of arrears, during which the landlord cannot start the procedure for the dismissal of the tenancy; the protection period after an eviction order has been noticed, during which the notice is not effective; the actual period of time from notice to quit until the eviction. These aspects are described for the five countries of the research, distinguishing between conditions in the private (table 1.16) and public rental market (table 1.17).

**Table 1.16.** Degree of tenancy protection in the private rental market in five selected EU countries.

	Country	Duration of the contract	Conditions to terminate a contract	Period of grace	Protection period	Period from notice to eviction
Unitary housing regime	Austria	Unlimited, but fixed term is possible (at least 3 years)	Severe breach of the contract; rent arrears; illegal subletting	Min. 8 days	4 weeks	Up to 9 months
	Sweden	Max 25 years	Rent arrears; severe disturbances; illegal subletting	Min. 6 days	3 weeks	5-6 months
Dual housing regime	Hungary	Not set (1 year standard)	Rent arrears; breach of the contract	8-16 days	Winter	Up to 6 months
	Italy	4+4 years	Rent arrears	20 days	30 days	6 to 18 months
	UK	Min 1 month (1 year standard)	Rent arrears; disturbances; domestic violence; damages; antisocial behaviour	No	2 weeks to 2 months	Not stated

Sources: Gerull, 2014; Schmidt and Dinse, 2014.

**Table 1.17.** Degree of tenancy protection in the public rental market in five selected EU countries.

	Country	Duration of the contract	Conditions to terminate a contract	Period of grace	Protection period	Period from notice to eviction
Unitary housing	Austria	Unlimited, but fixed term is possible (at least 3 years)	Severe breach of the contract; rent arrears; illegal subletting	Min. 8 days	4 weeks	Up to 9 months
	Sweden	Max 25 years	Rent arrears; breach of the contract; illegal subletting	Min. 6 days	3 weeks	5-6 months
Dual housing regime	Hungary	Not set	Rent arrears; breach of the contract; not residing in the dwelling	8-16 days	Winter	Up to 6 months
	Italy	Unlimited	Loss of the right; breach of the contract	Regionally framed	Regionally framed	Min 6 months
	UK	Unlimited (with probation period)	Rent arrears; breach of the contract; domestic violence; antisocial behaviour	No	2 weeks to 2 months	Not stated

Sources: Gerull, 2014; Schmidt and Dinse, 2014.

Tables 1.16 and 1.17 show the main general conditions related to tenancy protection in the five selected countries. Special statutes and local variations are established in each country, which will be detailed in chapter three. Broadly speaking, in countries adopting a unitary housing regime, regulation regarding tenancy protection are similar for both privately and publicly rented dwellings, while in countries characterised by a dual housing regime public rental is usually more protected than private tenancy. In most of the countries, non-payment of the rent leads, at least in theory, to a possible loss of tenancy within few days. The conditions to which a landlord can get rid of the tenant usually include rent arrears, severe breach of the contract (in terms of disturbances or damages), antisocial behaviour and, in some cases, illegal subletting. Evidence-based literature shows that rent arrears are the main drivers of dismissal of tenancy and evictions (Gerull, 2014; Stenberg et al., 2011). Table 1.18

shows the percentage of population suffering from arrears on mortgage or rent payments, that is population at risk of tenancy dismissal or eviction.

**Table 1.18.** Arrears on mortgage or rent payments in five selected EU countries, percentage.

Housing regime	Country	Total population			Population below poverty line*		
		2005	2010	2014	2005	2010	2014
Unitary	Austria	1.4	3.9	3.7	4.5	12.4	9.9
	Sweden	5.1	2.3	1.7	16.0	8.6	7.3
Dual	Hungary	2.8	5.6	7.5	6.8	10.2	15.3
	Italy	3.3	4.5	4.9	8.3	11.2	10.3
	UK	4.8	4.8	3.7	9.7	8.6	7.3

\* Below 60% of median equivalised income

Source: Eurostat, SILC

There is not any evident relationship between housing regimes and the data on mortgage or rent arrears. The situation is particularly relevant in Hungary and, as for low income households, in Italy. A dramatic worsening of the situation was evident in Austria between 2005 and 2010, while Sweden managed to more than halve the percentage of people in arrears.

As for the prevention and protection from evictions, in many countries the landlord can send the tenant a notice informing about the immediate dismissal of the tenancy after few days of arrears [Tables 1.16 and 1.17]. If the tenant does not leave the house after this first notice, a procedure for the eviction can be opened. Usually, the step towards eviction is rather complicated, since a decision of the court is necessary. The legal frameworks under which the courts operate and the regulation of the procedure for evictions are very different from country to country (Gerull, 2014). The procedure usually entails a first protection period (not in the UK), during which the tenant can correct its situation by paying the arrears or negotiating a possible solution. After that, a certain period of time passes between the notice of quit and the actual eviction, which ranges from few months to more than one year. During this time negotiated solutions can also be searched for by ad hoc services. These preventative ad hoc services are usually divided into three categories: primary, secondary and tertiary prevention (Gerull, 2014). Primary prevention includes general measures of welfare and housing policy promoting the right to housing for the general population. Secondary prevention is targeted to specific vulnerable groups; tertiary prevention is addressed to people already experiencing severe housing problems (Gerull, 2014). Secondary and tertiary prevention usually includes counselling, legal and financial advice, assistance with housing and social benefits, assistance in negotiation with landlords (Gerull, 2014; FEANTSA, 2008).

In most countries, preventative measures are arranged through the courts. The latter inform municipalities or other service providers about the cases, so to enable the preventative measures. They are particularly developed in Austria, where specialised prevention centres are available for tenants threatened by evictions. Economic help to meet rent arrears is provided in Austria and Sweden (Gerull, 2014). Some kind of support is provided in the UK, while preventative measures are particularly weak in Hungary and Italy. When a solution is not found neither before nor after the issue of the notice to quit, an eviction occurs. Few European countries have reliable data on evictions, and in particular the extent to which an eviction actually leads to homelessness is unknown almost everywhere (Gerull, 2014).

**Table 1.19.** Number of ordered and executed evictions in five selected EU countries.

Housing regime	Country	Legal protection	Ordered evictions	Executed evictions	Due to rent arrears	Leading to homelessness
Unitary	Austria	Strong	13,320	4,955	90%	No evidence
	Sweden	Strong	6,684	2,224	No evidence	No evidence
Dual	Hungary	Weak	No data	No data	No data	No data
	Italy	Medium	77,278	36,083	89.3%	No evidence
	UK	Medium	148,043	42,728	No evidence	No evidence

*Sources: Schoibl, 2014 (Austria - 2013); Kronofogden, 2015 (Sweden – 2015); Ministry of Justice (UK – 2015); Ministero dell’Interno, 2015 (Italy – 2014)*

In the last period (2010 – 2013/2014/2015 depending on the available data), evictions are decreasing in Austria and Sweden, and are increasing in Hungary, Italy and the UK. When available, data show that a very high percentage of evictions are due to rent arrears. The existence of preventative strategies, and in particular of targeted tailor-made support, is widely considered as a good practice (Gerull, 2014). However, one must not conclude that the stronger the legal protection and the preventative strategies, the lesser are evictions (Gerull, 2014). Beyond legal protection and preventative strategies, many other factors play a role in defining the level of evictions, e.g. unemployment, poverty, housing unaffordability, available alternatives to rehouse evicted people. As for the relationship between evictions and homelessness, the percentage of evicted people actually experiencing homelessness is unknown. However, according to some qualitative researches conducted in different European countries, evictions have to be considered as key drivers of homelessness (Busch-Geertsema et al., 2010). In case of loss of tenancy due to rent arrears (or other causes), a possible solution is the black market, which is a portion of the privately rented housing stock characterised by low tenant protection, large discretion by the landlord to terminate the contract without notice,

uncontrolled rents and, as a consequence, high housing instability and risk of homelessness. The dimension of the black market is difficult to measure.

To sum up, these are the main features of the housing systems in the five selected countries and their main consequences on homelessness:

- a) Countries adopting a unitary housing regime, namely Austria and Sweden, have a larger rental sector, and a relatively much larger public housing sector, than countries with a dual housing regime, namely Hungary and Italy. A partial exception is the UK, where the structure of the housing market is more similar to Austria and Sweden than to the other dualistic countries.
- b) In Austria and Sweden, social housing is targeted to all households, or at least also to middle class, while in the countries with a dual housing system it is targeted only to low income households.
- c) Homeless people are not prioritised anywhere to access social housing, unless they also pertain to other prioritised groups, like disabled people or women at risk of violence. On the contrary, some requirements for accessing social housing (e.g. not having a bad credit history or a criminal record) represent a substantial barrier.
- d) Rents are particularly high in the UK and Sweden. In dual housing systems they are determined mainly on a market basis and social rents are from two to five times lower than private rents. In unitary housing systems, rents are publicly regulated and private rents are only slightly higher than social rents. Rent prices are increasing everywhere.
- e) Housing allowances to sustain access to housing play a major role in the UK and Sweden. However, in all countries they are mainly targeted to mid-low income households, more than to the most vulnerable.
- f) Tenants enjoy a stronger legal protection in Austria and Sweden. However, two conditions allowing the landlord to dismiss the tenancy and evict the tenant weaken everywhere the position of homeless people in the rental sector: the existence of rent arrears and the breach of the contract due to severe disturbances and antisocial behaviour.
- g) Broadly speaking, people in public sector enjoy stronger tenancy protection than people in private sector almost everywhere.
- h) Evictions are an increasing issue in Hungary, Italy and the UK. However, there are not reliable data on the extent to which evictions actually result in homelessness.

## **1.4 Including homeless people in the housing market: a conceptualisation**

We conclude this overview on the housing dimension of homelessness by providing a conceptualisation of what is meant by including homeless people in the housing market under these conditions. We first provide a synthesis on the potential and actual role of different housing solutions for homeless people, considering the structure of opportunities and criticalities in different housing regimes and countries. We then propose a conclusive reflection on the position of homeless people in contemporary housing systems and how it could be addressed by the Housing First approach.

Home ownership is considered as an unrealistic solution for homeless people for reasons of cost. In this sense, the general convergent trend towards the increase in home ownership rates reduces housing opportunities for the most vulnerable groups, not considering that home ownership itself can be a locus for homelessness, especially for mid-low income households with an outstanding mortgage in Southern and Eastern European countries. The trend regards all the countries, albeit unitary regimes like Austria and Sweden, characterised by a tenure neutral policy, maintain a more balanced housing market.

The private rental market is, broadly speaking, a more accessible solution for homeless people. In many countries, governments are giving the private sector an increasing role in providing housing solutions for the most vulnerable people. However, the low availability of houses for rent, the high level of demand and the high prices hinder this strategy (FEANTSA, 2008). Furthermore, private landlords aim to make profit from renting their houses, and can easily discriminate against people perceived as possible source of costs and problems, like the homeless. A possible approach to make private rental sector more accessible for homeless people and, in general, vulnerable groups is to incentivise landlords to rent dwellings to them, mainly through two strategies: providing financial incentives, like tax reductions, and/or mediating between the landlord and the vulnerable tenant. Where the private rental sector is larger, like in Austria, Sweden, and the UK, prices are higher, while in Hungary and Italy prices are lower but there is less availability of dwellings for rent. Austria and Sweden manage to better control rents through rent setting mechanisms aimed at limiting pure market

forces. They also provide tenants with a rather strong degree of legal protection. However, some exceptional conditions hinder tenancy protection for the most vulnerable groups also in these countries: landlords can easily dismiss the tenancy and start the procedure for eviction in case of rent arrears or breaches of the contract due to severe disturbances or antisocial behaviour, which are sometimes associated to homeless people, especially when they make use of alcohol and drugs or have some mental health problems. Measures and services to prevent evictions are particularly developed in Austria and Sweden.

Public/social housing is generally the most affordable housing solution, and potentially the most accessible for homeless people, since the state can maintain a direct control over costs and allocation criteria and tenants enjoy stronger legal protection than in the private market. However, it suffers from clear under-funding and under-supply in all countries, in particular in countries adopting a dual housing system, where it is considered as a residual sector. In countries adopting a unitary housing regime, namely Austria and Sweden, the public rental sector is larger, but it addresses all households, or at least also middle class, and tends to house mid-low income households more than the most vulnerable groups. The UK is the country with the largest social sector amongst the country with a dual housing regime. The sector is very limited in Italy and Hungary. Homelessness is not an allocation criteria anywhere, so social housing tends to house mainly some specific groups, like older people, single-parent families and disabled people. Furthermore, local connection rules can exclude many homeless people, like immigrants but also people moving between regions of the same country. Social housing providers are increasingly required to be profitable and tend to exclude tenants at high risk of non paying rents or cause damages and problems of management. Specific barriers to access have been established everywhere to avoid these situations, excluding people with a bad credit history or a criminal record.

Kemeny's typology still maintains its validity in highlighting the differences between unitary and dual housing regimes. However, the outcome of both regimes for homeless people is very similar: they find it very hard to access affordable housing. Home ownership is not for the homeless. The private rental sector is more accessible, but it is market-driven and increasingly residual and expensive in most countries; furthermore, in most countries tenancy protection is lower than in social housing and, even where it is stronger, it is not for the homeless. Social housing is potentially an affordable solution, but it is residual in most countries and even where it is larger, it is hard to access for the homeless.



The big question rising from this scenario is: where then do homeless people live? Following Scanlon et al. (2014), we can call the specific segment of the market where the most vulnerable are segregated “the very social housing” sector. In all the five countries the outcome of the housing system is indeed a segmentation of the housing market, which can be represented as in Figure 1.20.

**Figure 1.20.** Structure and composition of the housing market.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>1. Home ownership sector</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">High and middle income households with some poor owners</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>2. Private rental sector</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Good quality stock and high tenancy protection: middle income households, families Black market, poor quality stock and low tenancy protection: low income households, immigrants, young people</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>3. Public/social rental sector</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Middle and low income households, especially: older people, single-parent families, disabled people, regular immigrants, women at risk of violence</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>4. Very social housing sector</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Vulnerable groups: homeless people, asylum seekers, victims of abuse, drug and alcohol addicts, people with mental illness</p>

Such a segmented structure is common to all housing systems. The differences are in the extent and composition of sectors 1, 2 and 3. In some countries, characterised by a unitary rental market, the different income groups are more equally distributed among home ownership, private and public rental sector, although mid-low income households are increasingly segregated in the rental market. In the dual housing systems, the distribution is more segmented, with the social housing sector hosting low income households, the private sector mainly housing the mid-low income groups and the home ownership sector housing the

middle and upper class. Yet, for the most vulnerable the outcome is similar in all the systems: they live in the very social housing sector.

The very social housing sector is composed of different types of accommodation. In some cases, special residences are provided for specific vulnerable groups: night shelters or hostels for homeless people, special shelters for people victims of abuse, collective centres for asylum seekers, for drug and alcohol addicts or for mentally ill people. In other cases, vulnerable people are housed in publicly or privately rented dwellings, normally on a temporary basis and for emergency reasons. In any case, what characterises the very social housing sector is that accommodation is provided by public (usually municipal) social services within the framework of social policy and that it is highly stigmatised (Lévy-Vroelant and Reinprecht, 2014). Within this framework, including homeless people in the housing market means moving them away from the very social housing sector by providing them with access to affordable and stable housing in the private or public rental sectors. It is exactly what Housing First provides to its beneficiaries, who are therefor included in the official housing market on a stable basis. Different housing regimes, and local housing and welfare configurations, shape the way this move occurs and its outcomes, as it will be described in chapters three and four. Before, we need to know much more on Housing First.

## **2. Housing First: histories, geographies and concepts**

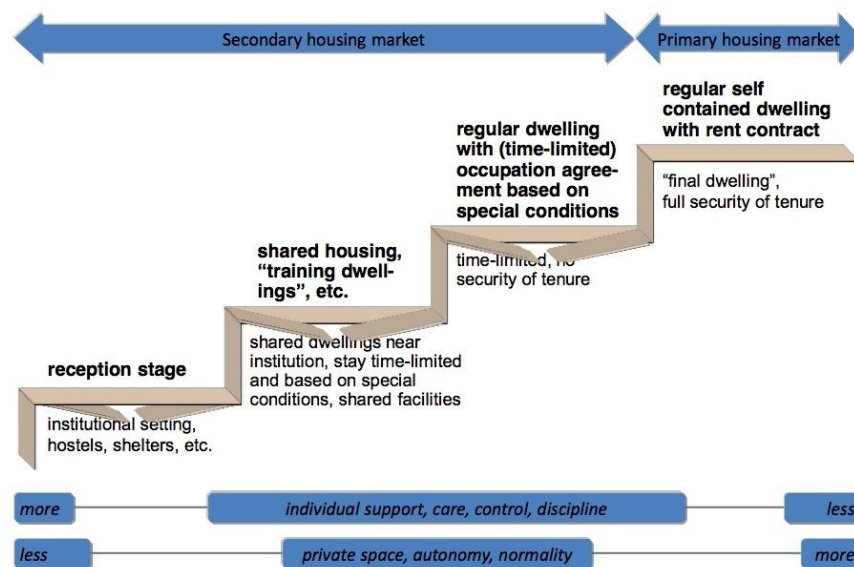
### **2.1 The Pathways Housing First Programme**

Before having institutionalised into a model and used as an approach to innovate homelessness services in North America, Australia, Japan and Europe, Housing First is a localised programme elaborated and implemented in New York City in 1992 by the non-profit corporation Pathways to Housing, Inc. This section provides a description of the main features of Pathways Housing First. Its genesis, described in 2.1.1, lays in the deinstitutionalisation process started in the 1960s in psychiatry and in the alleged failure of the so-called staircase model. The following paragraphs describe the main features of the programme, in terms of principles, aims, target group, housing and social support services, and funding.

#### ***2.1.1 The staircase model and the genesis of Housing First***

The origins of Housing First are deeply rooted in the American socio-political construction of the issue of homelessness, and date back to the closure of the long-stay psychiatric hospitals in the United States during the 1950s and the 1960s (Pleace, 2011). Patients were massively deinstitutionalised, that is they were released into the community. Yet, deinstitutionalisation was not accompanied by the provision of community support and mainly consisted of medication. Hence, many ex-patients were readmitted to hospitals, experienced poverty and unemployment, and became homeless (Nelson, 2010). Since then, much of the research on homelessness in the United States has focused on homeless single adults with severe mental illness, especially on the so-called chronically homeless, that is single adults with mental illness experiencing homelessness since at least one year (Stanhope and Dunn, 2011). Initial resettlement of ex-patients was provided through the so-called “staircase model” (also known as “linear resettlement model”, “continuum of care”, “linear residential treatment”), that has then institutionalised and diffused to all the services to (chronically) homeless people (Tsemberis, 2010; Pleace, 2011). In the staircase model the services are organised like a ladder, comprising a number of steps for the homeless to climb up, as described in Figure 2.1.

**Figure 2.1.** The staircase model.



Source: Busch-Geertsema 2013.

Each step is associated to a type of accommodation and a degree of security of tenure. Homeless people are firstly placed into emergency accommodation, then in shared temporary housing and then in transitional housing occupied under special conditions. Finally, if they successfully reach the top of the staircase they can access to permanent housing with full tenancy rights. This system involves a number of services like outreach teams, night shelters, hostels and several types of collective and individual temporary housing where people can usually stay some months or eventually one or two years (Tsemberis, 2010). During this ascent from the streets to the regular housing market, homeless people are supposed to overcome different kind of problems, related i.e. to mental illness, substance abuse and indebtedness, being strictly driven and monitored by health and social workers. At each step the quality of life, as regards accommodation, privacy and autonomy, increases as a sort of reward for good behaviour, while the degree of control decreases. In any case, housing is not an explicit purpose: the focus is on social recovery. This model has proved to be rather problematic, since the requirement to comply with psychiatric treatment and keep off alcohol and drugs represent a relevant barrier for many homeless people. Because of this, many of them end in being trapped in a step, or cyclically pushed down to the ground floor, often a night shelter, where they spend much of their life, in a condition of chronic homelessness. As a reaction, some of them opt for abandoning the services, being *de facto* expelled by the

welfare system. In particular, the high attrition rate of the staircase model, that is the loss of service users between stages, was mainly attributed to: the stress generated in the users because of continuous changes of setting; the gradual reduction of support, which may not suit to some homeless people; the use of standardised programmes; the rejection of potentially problematic candidates (Johnsen and Teixeira, 2010). During the 1990s, the validity of the staircase model in tackling homelessness was put under severe discussion by a number of evidence-based researches, demonstrating that levels of homelessness were increasing, especially since the 1980s (Stanhope and Dunn, 2011), that chronically homeless people were highly overrepresented in shelters (Kuhn and Culhane, 1998), and that the system to take care of this population was much more expensive than expected (Culhane et al., 2002; Culhane et al., 2007). The combination of these findings contributed to frame the issue of homelessness as chronic and expensive because of a failure of the services based on the staircase model and to make it climb the priorities in policy agenda. Funds were increasingly allocated on the search for new solutions to the problem, as will be detailed in section 2.2.

A new service model emerged, providing patients of the ex-long-stay psychiatric hospitals and homeless people with ordinary housing where they could leave independently with the help of a more flexible community-based social support. Within this model, Nelson (2010) distinguishes between supportive and supported housing. In supportive housing users are provided with both mental health services and social support in independent apartments, but still within the logic of the staircase model with permanent housing at the end of the continuum. In supported housing, users are provided with permanent independent housing and independent social support. However, as shown by Tabol et al. (2010), the labels supportive and supported housing have been interchangeably used, and identify a vast range of services vaguely defined as independent housing with support, to the point that the paradigm shift towards supported housing can be intended either as a radical change in the provision of services to mentally ill and/or homeless people or as a sort of residential treatment program (Tabol et al., 2010). In the first view, it represents the attempt to shift the attention on community integration and the locus of control from staff to client (Ridgway and Zippel, 1990). Yet, many programmes implementing supported housing are *de facto* based on the staircase model, and should be labelled as supportive housing in Nelson's typology.

Within this framework of crisis of the staircase model, increasing attention towards (and confusion around) supported housing and high political attention on these issues, the

psychiatrist Sam Tsemberis founded the non-profit organisation Pathways to Housing in 1992. Despite the lack of clarity discussed above, the supported housing service model contains many basic features of the Housing First approach, like a focus on community integration, consumer choice, tenant empowerment and flexibility of social support (Tabol et al., 2010), to the point that Housing First can be intended as a radical example of supported housing in practice (Nelson, 2010). The approach of Pathways to Housing was gradually refined and its methodology was systematised in 2010, when Sam Tsemberis published the manual describing what is worldwide known as Pathways Housing First.

### ***2.1.2 The basics of Housing First: principles, aims and target group***

Housing First as moulded by Pathways to Housing is based on eight principles (Tsemberis, 2010), which are briefly described in the followings.

- ✓ **Housing as a basic human right.** Housing First claims a right to housing for everyone. As a consequence, it is offered as a right rather than as something that homeless people have to earn by successfully participating into treatment programmes.
- ✓ **Respect, warmth and compassion for all clients.** Each member of the staff involved in Housing First programmes is requested to show a warm attitude towards clients, paying a special attention on non-verbal communication, routine communication like greetings and welcome, empathy and responsiveness towards clients.
- ✓ **A commitment to clients.** The staff of Housing First programmes should always give proof of its commitment to the clients, who usually have a long experience of failed relationships with service providers. This commitment should be particularly strong in critical times, e.g. when the clients are hospitalised or incarcerated or return to the streets.
- ✓ **Scattered-site housing.** Dwellings rented for the purpose of Housing First programmes should be suitable, affordable, decent apartments spread across cities and not concentrated in one single place.
- ✓ **Separation of housing and services.** In Housing First programmes, social support is provided separately from housing. Clinical and social issues regarding e.g. physical and mental health, addictions, employment, family are regarded as distinct from housing issues, regarding e.g. housing maintenance and rent payment. Clinical crisis (e.g.

psychotic episodes) should not impact on the housing domain, as housing crisis (e.g. eviction because of illegal activity) should not impact on the provision of social support.

- ✓ **Consumer choice and self-determination.** Housing First is based on the assumption that homeless people are capable of deciding on their own goals. Therefore they should have a voice in decisions regarding the housing and social services they receive; they should select their own apartments and furniture and decide upon the type and extent of social services they want to receive.
- ✓ **A recovery orientation.** Housing First aims at supporting homeless people's recovery, with recovery defined as "the process in which people are able to live, work, learn and participate fully in their communities" (New Freedom Commission on Mental Health, 2003, quoted in Tsemberis, 2010, p. 27). The extent to which this orientation is translated into concrete support should be decided by the clients.
- ✓ **Harm reduction.** Housing First uses a harm reduction approach that focuses on reducing risks associated with unhealthy and harmful behaviours, such as drug and alcohol abuse, unprotected sex, accumulated debts.

Drawing on these principles, the main goals of Housing First are: housing stability, in terms of tenure security and capacity of homeless people to maintain housing and live independently over time; improvements in mental health; cessation or reductions in drug and alcohol use; improvements in physical health; reductions in criminal behaviour (if present); social integration, in terms of reconnection with family, (re)building of a social network, development of social relations in local community; engagement with work related or training activities (when possible) (Pleace, 2012). As for the target group, Pathways Housing First (henceforth PHF) is concerned with primary homelessness, that is rooflessness and houselessness in the ETHOS typology, thus including people living on the streets or in other public spaces and people living in shelters, hostels and other emergency accommodations. Three key elements better specify the PHF target group: age (clients must be 18 or more), mental health condition (clients must have a psychiatric disability) and time (clients must be chronically homeless, that is for at least a year). An important additional feature affecting about 80 per cent of PHF clients is the problematic relationship with substances like alcohol and drugs (Tsemberis, 2010). Users of PHF also tend to report acute health problems (e.g. diabetes, hepatitis, HIV, diseases of the heart, liver and other organs) and some form of

criminal justice involvement, including in some cases incarceration. According to the Pathways to Housing guidelines, persons having a multitude of problems (e.g. ill physical and mental health, substance abuse, a history of incarceration) should have a preference in access to Housing First programmes (Tsemberis, 2010). In order to gain access to the programme, people must accept two requirements: agreeing to at least one weekly visit by a staff member and paying 30 per cent of monthly income toward rent. Access to PHF is generally mediated through referrals from homelessness services, psychiatric services and prisons, but self-referrals are also possible (Pleace, 2012). Users are enrolled on a “first come first served” basis, without specific selection criteria among eligible candidates (Atherton and McNaughton Nicholls, 2008).

### ***2.1.3 Housing and housing support services***

As established in the basic principles, in the Housing First model housing is a basic human right and it is provided separately from social support and unconditionally from compliance with treatment services. The provision of a safe, decent, private and affordable place to live is the cornerstone of the programme, since housing is considered as the foundation of any pathways out of homelessness. In order to comply with the principle of consumer choice and self-determination, the apartments should be selected by the clients among at least three proposals, and they should also be able to express preferences regarding different aspects: apartment type, furniture, neighbourhood location, proximity to public transportation and other services, proximity to relatives (Tsemberis, 2010). The consumer choice principle is supposed to reinforce the feeling of making and having a home, intended as both a physical and emotional setting (see also chapter 1.1). Obviously, the degree of choice is limited by the housing market and by rent ceilings decided by the programme. The rehousing of people accepted in the programme, including the selection and preparation of the apartment, should be as rapid as possible, and in any case it should take no more than four weeks (Tsemberis, 2010). During this time, the programme should offer the client temporary housing solutions like hostels or temporary apartments. Once the apartment is ready, the client must sign a contract. This should be a regular tenancy contract between the landlord and the tenant; however, landlords may refuse to sign a direct contract with homeless people. In this case the contract is signed between the landlord and the Housing First programme, which then sublets the apartment to the client. This practice should be used only as a short term arrangement, while after a period of satisfactory tenancy the client should hold a direct



rent contract (Tsemberis, 2010). Pathways Housing First guidelines recommend to invest time and resources for establishing profitable relationships with landlords that can provide affordable housing. Depending on the local context, landlords can be public authorities, public companies, private individuals or management companies. They should be incentivised to rent houses for the purposes of Housing First programmes, underlying advantages for them to participate in the programme: rents are supposed to be paid always in full and on time, thanks to the mediation of the programme; the apartments are not going to be vacant, since the programme commits with providing new tenants in case of dismissals; both the tenants and the landlords are supported by professional staff available seven days and 24 hours; eventual damages are repaired by the programme; the landlord's commitment is decisive to help homeless persons to exit their condition (Tsemberis, 2010). In Pathways Housing First, clients are required to pay 30 per cent of their income toward the rent, independently of the source of income (wages, social benefits, pensions etc.). Rents for clients with no source of income should be entirely paid by the programme, not to exclude anyone. However, most PHF users are actually in receipt of welfare benefits linked to mental illness, in order to partially sustain the rental costs (Pleace, 2012). As established by the basic principles, Housing First programmes should provide scattered-site independent housing. This means that accommodations should be integrated into regular buildings and communities and not concentrated in a single building devoted to social or health purposes (like in the single-site model). The housing component is indeed considered as a cornerstone for achieving the goals of social inclusion and community integration.

Housing support services aim at helping the clients in maintaining housing. They include both technical arrangements about the working conditions of the apartments and support to prevent eviction, and should be managed by the housing specialist. The housing specialist is a member of the team managing Housing First working both with tenants and landlords for the common purpose of finding and keeping the apartment. Similarly to the social support services, housing support services are provided as far as possible in the clients' apartment and their only compulsory element is the weekly home visit. Typical risks of eviction for Housing First tenants are rent arrears and severe disturbances. In many cases, disturbances are not created by Housing First tenants themselves but by their old friends, who may still live on the streets and be willing to profit from the new housing situation of their mate. This may create two problems: first, the tenant's friends may become a sort of additional not registered tenants; in this case the client is at risk of eviction because of violation of the contract. Second,

they may create severe disturbances to the neighbours and this may also represent a violation of the contract. In case of eviction due to violations of the contract, Pathways Housing First advocates for a relocation in a second, and even a third, apartment, although this may be difficult due to other candidates waiting for their first opportunity.

#### ***2.1.4 Community integration and social support services***

In Pathways Housing First, social support is provided according to a community-based interdisciplinary approach including a wide range of services: health and mental health treatment; addiction treatment; family connections; employment counselling; legal advice; information regarding benefits and entitlements, and recreation and leisure (Tsemberis, 2010). It is provided according to an individualised plan agreed with the client defining the actions to be implemented to achieve immediate, intermediate and future goals in different life domains such as housing, health, addiction, employment, family and social relations. Examples of clients' goals are: treating mental illness, reducing drug or alcohol use, eating healthy food, losing or taking weight, getting a job, visiting relatives, obtaining a driver's licence, getting new friends, doing sport, going to the library and so on (Tsemberis, 2010). The most important principle at the basis of the provision of social support in the Housing First model is that the clients can decide on the type and extent of services they want to receive, without this decision having any consequence on their right to housing. The only compulsory requirement is the acceptance of a weekly home visit by a member of the staff. As per the basic principles, the social support is provided with an harm reduction approach, aiming at minimising the negative consequences of harmful behaviours deriving from drug and alcohol abuse, unprotected sex, psychiatric symptoms.

Social support in the Housing First model is provided through the so-called Assertive Community Treatment (henceforth ACT). ACT is a community mental health programme for treating people with severe mental illness elaborated in the 1970s in the United States by Leonard Stein, Mary Ann Test and Arnold Marx (Tsemberis, 2010). It involves a multidisciplinary team of professionals in delivering treatment directly in a community, rather than institutional, setting. The main features of ACT are: interdisciplinarity, with professionals coming from different fields; a team approach; low staff-client ratios (about 1:10); service delivery in the community; assertive outreach; ready access, especially during crisis (seven days, 24 hours); time unlimited services (Tsemberis, 2010). Social support

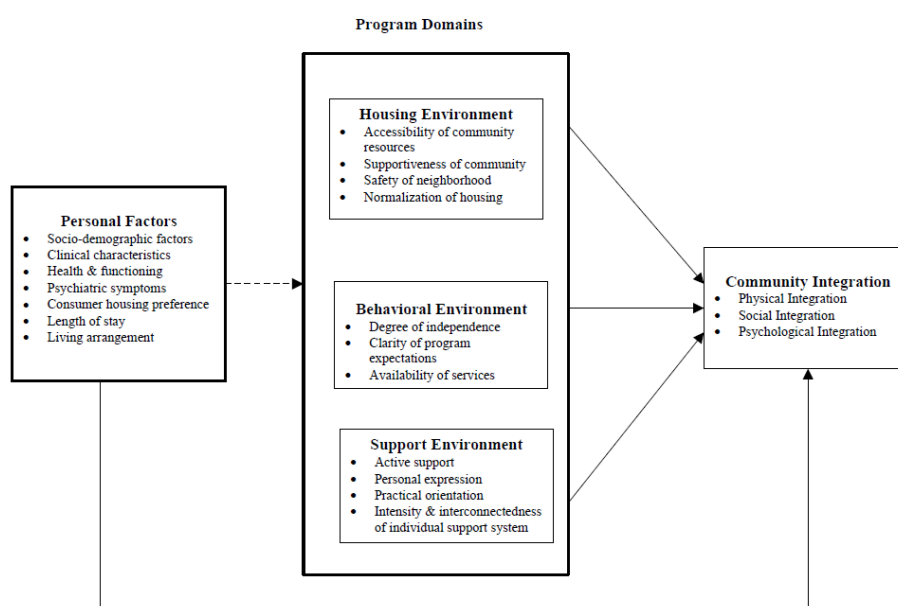
services in the Housing First model adopt all these operative principles. Interdisciplinarity is guaranteed by a team involving professionals from different fields, and in particular: a team leader; a psychiatrist, functioning as the team's medical director and usually employed part time; a health worker, dealing with primary health care; a social worker; a substance abuse specialist; an employment specialist, coaching clients in job search (writing letters and résumés, preparing interviews, adjusting work schedule, identifying career paths, mediating with employers); and, optionally, a family specialist, working with the clients in restoring their relationships with relatives and other social networks (Tsemberis, 2010). The Pathways Housing First guidelines also recommend the hiring of a peer specialist, that is someone who experienced the condition of homeless and can provide counselling from an insider perspective, demonstrating to clients that recovery is possible. Services are delivered as far as possible in the clients' environment, that is their apartment, neighbourhood or, eventually, workplace. They have a ready access, being available on call seven days a week, 24 hours a day, and are time-unlimited, that is they are provided until the client deserves them or want to receive them.

In case of clients with less severe disabilities, the Assertive Community Treatment can be replaced by the Intensive Case Management (henceforth ICM). ICM is a model of caring people with psychiatric disabilities elaborated by Charles Rapp and Richard Gosha (2006, quoted in Tsemberis, 2010) focusing on individual strengths and drawing on the resources of the community. It is centred on the relationship between the case manager and the client, with the latter being considered as the director of the helping process. The main differences between an ICM and ACT approach in Housing First programmes lay in the staff-client ration, which is 1:20 in ICM; the availability of the service, five days a week in ICM (but availability on call should be 24/7); the frequency of the home visit, every two weeks in ICM (Tsemberis, 2010). Furthermore ICM is more concerned with mediating between the client and the services available in the community rather than with directly providing support services. For this reason ICM teams are usually smaller than ACT teams, including a team leader, an assistant and a number of case managers (usually social workers) depending on the number of clients (Tsemberis, 2010).

A particularly awkward activity provided by social support services in Housing First programmes is community integration. Connecting clients with the local community is supposed to be an important antidote to loneliness and isolation, which are two very concrete

risks for Housing First tenants. Yet, a definition of what has to be intended with community integration in Housing First programmes and how to achieve is not provided. Wong and Solomon (2002) provide the most advanced attempt to define community integration in housing programmes, although not explicitly referring to Housing First. Their definition include three dimensions: physical integration refers to the capacity for using goods and services and participating in activities within a community; social integration refers to the size and quality of a person's social network, and the engagement in social interactions with community members; psychological integration has to do with the feeling of belonging to a community and of exercising influence in that community. Drawing on this multidimensional definition, Wong and Solomon (2002) provide a conceptual model of factors influencing community integration in supportive independent housing services, which is reported in Figure 2.2.

**Figure 2.2.** A conceptual model of factors influencing community integration of persons with psychiatric disabilities living in supportive independent housing.



*Source: Wong and Solomon, 2002.*

In this model, personal factors are conceived as potential determinants of community integration, but also as influencing the assignment of users to different housing and social support services. Other three factors, pertaining to the domain of the service design and implementation, are housing environment, behavioural environment and support environment. The model draws on a contextual approach which helps in understanding institutional and

structural factors hindering or fostering community integration and identifying which resources could be mobilised to overcome barriers and how (Ornelas et al., 2014). The effectiveness of Housing First in promoting community integration is briefly discussed in chapter 2.2. Finally, two possible critical points have to be bear in mind when dealing with community integration. First, homelessness does not necessarily means a total lack of social integration; homeless people could instead experience a sense of community, which should be kept in mind when rehousing them. Second, communities do not necessarily develop around places, but also around shared interests and identities; this means that the inclusion/exclusion dynamics could refer to connectedness to place-based but also dispersed communities (Pleace and Quilgars, 2013).

### ***2.1.5 Funding Housing First***

According to the sample budget provided by Tsemberis (2010) for a programme serving 80 people in a large US city, the approximate annual cost of PHF is around 1.2 million dollars. The programme is mainly funded through two streams: funds for the rental support come from the federal government. Many users of PHF are eligible for the housing choice voucher, a housing allowance targeted to people in extreme poverty issued by the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development and administered by local housing authorities (Tsemberis, 2010). Funds for the social support usually come from grants in the start-up phase, but the goal should be to transfer programme costs to a mainstream funder like Medicaid or the National Health Plan (Tsemberis, 2010). Pathways to Housing suggests to establish a consistent emergency fund to sustain rents for users who cannot pay their 30 per cent or who are not eligible for the housing choice voucher (Tsemberis, 2010).

## **2.2 The institutionalisation and diffusion of Housing First**

Housing First began as an experimental programme in New York City and gradually gained the status of a model, an approach, a paradigm, a policy strategy, a philosophy in the United States, Canada, Australia, Japan and Europe, as it will be described in paragraphs one and two. A growing bulk of literature based on diverse political-practical orientations is interested in analysing Housing First. Raitakari and Juhila (2015) consider Housing First as an independent research branch and, drawing on the analysis of 184 publications, identify nine different types of literature, including comparative studies, guidelines, evaluation reports,

commentaries, reviews, implementation and outcome studies, development of scales, interaction studies and critical research. Issues of fidelity to the original model have emerged during the process of diffusion and are discussed in section three. The reasons of such a broad diffusion of the model are mainly three: the attention given by Pathways to Housing to evaluation and model of the programme; the presentation of Housing First as an evidence-based practice; the presentation of Housing First as a cost effective practice. We briefly discuss these three points.

Pathways to Housing has always shown a special attention to aspects of evaluation, communication, production of knowledge around the programme. Since the beginning, it has conducted evaluations which include longitudinal comparisons and cost analysis, and has promoted the realisation of external independent studies on the results of Housing First. This kind of work has gradually allowed to produce a certain deal of knowledge around the functioning of Housing First, which has been finally institutionalised in the manual authored by Sam Tsemberis in 2010. It has been a decisive step in the promotion and diffusion of Housing First, since it provided people and organisations interested in implementing a Housing First programme with a clear description of the programme and with instructions on how to bring Housing First in their city.

As repeated in almost every text about Housing First, it has been promoted as an evidence-based practice. This means that multiple empirical studies have demonstrated that it has a positive impact on its target population and on welfare systems, in terms of housing retention and residential stability; improvement of users' quality of life; inclusion of people rejected by other programmes, included other supported housing services; reductions in use of ordinary services; cost effectiveness (Tsemberis, 2010). The housing retention rate indicates the percentage of users retaining their housing in the long term. It is the most important indicator of the Housing First's impact, since housing stability is the main purpose of the programme. Table 2.1 sums up the housing retention rate of Pathways Housing First and similar programmes as reported by different studies. As evident, between 60 and 90 per cent of Housing First users experience housing stability at least in the mid-term, against a rate of 15 to 50 per cent amongst control groups including users assigned to services based on the staircase model or on supported housing requiring treatment.

**Table 2.1.** Housing retention rate of Pathways Housing First and similar Housing First programmes according to different studies.

Years	HF group rate	Control group rate	Affiliation of the HF group	Affiliation of the control group	Source
1	85%	25%	PHF New York	Staircase services	Tsemberis et al., 2004
1	80%	n.a.	7 PHF programmes in the US	n.a.	Mares et al., 2007
1	90%	n.a.	HF Toronto	n.a.	Toronto Shelter Support & Housing Administration, 2007
1	84%	n.a.	PHF New York, HF Seattle, HF San Diego	n.a.	Pearson et al., 2009
1,5	60%	15%	PHF Chicago	Staircase services	Sadowski, 2008
1,5	78%	n.a.	PHF Rhode Island	n.a.	Hirsch and Glasser, 2007
2	84%	n.a.	PHF Philadelphia	n.a.	Dunbeck, 2006
4	75%	50%	PHF New York	Staircase services	Padgett et al., 2006
4	78%	n.a.	PHF New York	n.a.	Stefancic and Tsemberis, 2007
5	88%	47%	PHF New York	Supported housing requiring treatment	Tsemberis and Eisenberg, 2000

Pathways Housing First is also associated with improved quality of life of the target population. In particular users of PHF are reported to increase their sense of independence, control, privacy and identity (Meschede, 2004; Padgett, 2007); improve their mental health and reduce substance use (Dunbeck, 2006; Toronto Shelter Support & Housing Administration, 2007); be optimistic about future (Toronto Shelter Support & Housing Administration, 2007; Macnaughton et al., 2013). Studies also demonstrate that users of PHF substantially reduce their use of ordinary services like shelters, emergency services, hospitals and prisons (Gulcur et al., 2003; Meschede, 2004; Hirsch and Glasser, 2007; Sadowski, 2008). As for community integration, the limited available evidence suggests that Housing First has some impact but not on all aspects of integration. Some studies report general improvements in the users' capacity of engaging in social interactions and feeling socially integrated in "normal" human communities (Yanos et al., 2004; Hirsch and Glasser, 2007). The study of Tsai et al. (2012), specifically aimed at investigating social integration in Housing First programmes, reports improvements in some areas (e.g. having social relations with relatives, friends and neighbours; visiting shops and banks;) and no significant increases in activity in other areas (e.g. using public transport; visiting libraries; participating in cultural events). In

the field of employment, Housing First does not seem to have significant impact, although evidence is still very limited (Pleace and Quilgars, 2013).

The cost effectiveness of Housing First is a contested point. Pathway to Housing reports a number of studies that demonstrate that PHF is associated with decreased costs compared to traditional services, considering that users of PHF significantly diminish their use of other services (Gulcur et al., 2003; Tsemberis, 2010). Table 2.2 sums up the esteem of the savings associated with Pathways Housing First programmes.

**Table 2.1.** Cost savings associated with Pathways Housing First programmes according to different studies.

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Savings</b>	<b>Source</b>
PHF New York	16,281 \$ per person per year	Culhane et al., 2002
PHF Denver	4,745 \$ per person per year	Perlman and Parvesnky, 2006
PHF Rhode Island	8,839 \$ per person per year	Hirsch and Glasser, 2007
PHF Seattle	3,200,000 \$ in cost of services per year	HUD, 2007

With regards to the alleged cost effectiveness of Housing First, some scholars highlight that savings are possible but only in the long term and with huge initial investments that can be difficult to raise and whose absence prevents some initiatives from achieving satisfying results (Bergamaschi and Cipria, 2013). Furthermore, it should not be taken for granted that all homeless people would be in shelters, hospitals or prisons if they were not housed in apartments (Rosenheck, 2010).

The validity of the evidence base provided for backing Housing First has been contested by some scholars, mainly reporting three critics. First, the bulk of the research on Housing First results has been published by Sam Tsemberis himself or by a group of researchers affiliated with Pathways to Housing or other agencies managing Housing First programmes (Groton, 2013). Second, the political attractiveness of Housing First is the result of an effective marketing strategy of Pathways to Housing, which has carefully combined only selected evidence to deliver apparently spectacular positive outcomes (Rosenheck, 2010; Stanhope and Dunn, 2011). Third, Housing First and staircase services are not comparable, since they have different goals: the former is mainly focused on housing stability, while the latter aims at a much broader recovering of homeless people (Stanhope and Dunn, 2011). As for the first two critics, concerning the quality of the evidence base provided in the United States, it is worth noting that much of what has been published has been subject to academic



peer review and that research on Housing First services in Europe is leading to similar results in terms of success of Housing First under many aspects across a wide range of countries (Busch-Geertsema, 2012; Pleace and Bretherton, 2013). The argument against the comparability between Housing First and staircase services is also difficult to sustain. Housing First too, indeed, has broader goals than the simple housing stability, aiming at improving health conditions, reducing substance use and promoting social integration (Pleace and Bretherton, 2013).

### ***2.2.1 Housing First in the United States: from a programme to a strategy***

Housing First has been successfully mainstreamed in the United States, being both horizontally transferred among cities and vertically upscaled from the local to the national level. While promoting the establishment of new Housing First programmes in many US cities, Pathways to Housing has also been capable to successfully lobbying for the adoption of a Housing First strategy at the federal level. Some favourable circumstances fostered the success of the lobbying action of Pathways to Housing: following the aforementioned crisis of the staircase model, funds for new homelessness programmes were increased by 35 per cent by the Republican Administration in 2003, under the ambitious purpose of ending chronic homelessness. A brand new public agency, the US Interagency Council on Homelessness, was created *ad hoc*. The new agency immediately launched a programme called Collaborative Initiative to Help End Chronic Homelessness, with the goal to promote the diffusion of supported housing services for chronic homeless people in all country (Stanhope and Dunn, 2011). Within this endorsing framework, Pathways to Housing was able to catch the attention of the newly established agency by providing the already discussed evidence base. The US Interagency Council on Homelessness started to advocate for adopting Housing First as a national strategy, which means adopting a policy aimed at providing access to permanent housing for homeless people, reducing programmes and funds for services based on the staircase model or on traditional supported housing (Tsemberis, 2010). This policy strategy was confirmed by the Democratic Administration, which issued different federal streams of funding for the implementation of Housing First programmes across the United States. The first pilots were financed by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, through two dedicated programs: the Supportive Housing Program and the Shelter Plus Care Program (Bergamaschi and Cipria, 2013). Hereafter the Rapid Re-Housing Program got funds for 25 million dollars in 2008, and the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program of

2009 included investments of 12.5 million dollars for the implementation of Housing First programmes addressed to 35,000 homeless people in the United States (Bergamaschi and Cipria, 2013). The strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness of the Obama Administration is called Opening Doors and strongly endorses programmes for permanent supported housing, among which Housing First plays a major role (USICH, 2015). Thanks to this broad political engagement at the national level, hundreds of US cities are reported to having established a more or less extensive Housing First programme, although it is not possible to gather the exact number of programmes implemented in the United States. In terms of impact, the number of chronically homeless people in the United States has dropped by about 30 per cent (from around 175,000 to 124,000 people) between 2005 and 2007 (Stanhope and Dunn, 2011), and a further 31 per cent between 2007 and 2015 (HUD, 2015); these results have been partially attributed to the effectiveness of Housing First. Such a widespread diffusion started to raise the issue of diversity in Housing First services: although being inspired by the same original model described in the previous section, different programmes can be quite different from one another, with some projects providing accommodation with on-site staffing, floating support not arranging housing or just minor modifications of staircase-based services (Pleace and Bretherton, 2013). According to a study on eleven US services receiving federal grants to implement Housing First programmes, only two of them actually matched the original Pathways Housing First model (Kresky-Wolff et al., 2010). The issue of diversification amongst Housing First services has grown in importance when the model started to be implemented in European cities, and is therefore extensively treated in section 2.1.3 after a review on Housing First policies and practices in Europe.

### ***2.2.2 Housing First in Europe: policies and practices***

Since the late 1990s, European welfare states started to adopt a new philosophy in the provision of services for vulnerable people, including strategies like deinstitutionalisation, decentralisation and individualisation of support (Busch-Geertsema, 2012). In the specific field of homelessness, policies and practices driven by a supported housing approach, in some cases also providing permanent housing, were already implemented in some countries, like Belgium, Germany and the UK (Atherton and McNaughton Nicholls, 2008; Johnsen and Teixeira, 2010). These ongoing developments, together with the stunning outcomes coming from the United States, provided a favourable support for the diffusion of the Housing First approach in the provision of services for homeless people. The first city to test a Housing

First initiative in Europe was Amsterdam in 2006 (Cortese and Iazzolino, 2014). Since then, dozens of local projects have been promoted in most European countries. An important document advocating for the adoption of a Housing First approach in Europe is the report of the European Consensus Conference on Homelessness, published in 2011 (ECCH, 2011). The conference was co-organised by the European Commission and FEANTSA and it turned to be a milestone in EU-level policy coordination on homelessness. The conclusion of the report strongly advocates for further exploring housing-led approaches and “calls in particular for testing of the Housing First service model in European contexts” (ECCH, 2011, p. 23). A successive important step in the process of institutionalisation of Housing First in Europe is the EU-funded project Housing First Europe, which compared five projects implementing Housing First in five European cities (Amsterdam, Budapest, Copenhagen, Glasgow and Lisbon) (Busch-Geertsema, 2013). The research demonstrated that in Europe, as well as in the United States, the Housing First model was giving impressive outcomes in terms of housing retention: after two years of experimentation, between 80 and 90 per cent of Housing First users were still housed everywhere, with the only exception of Budapest. Moreover, 70 per cent of users declared an improved quality of life after having been engaged in Housing First programmes; 50 per cent reduced substance use; most of them reported improvements in their social relations and mental health condition. The cost effectiveness of the programmes has been demonstrated in at least two cases, Amsterdam and Lisbon (Busch-Geertsema, 2013), and has been confirmed by a publication of FEANTSA (2013) discussing the costs of homelessness in Europe. In this comparative analysis of the costs of combating homelessness in 13 European countries, it emerged that supported housing is more convenient than traditional services based on the staircase model (FEANTSA, 2013). The network created by the project Housing First Europe has then become a permanent European platform for mutual learning and exchange of practices among the various cities and organisations implementing Housing First throughout Europe, under the initiative of FEANTSA. Despite the increased attention at the European level, Housing First is mainly implemented in the form of small-scale and experimental local projects, with some national programmes or networks growing in the last years. Table 2.3 provides information on the diffusion of the Housing First model in the 28 EU member states.

**Table 2.3.** Housing First in the European Union.

Housing First as an implemented national strategy	Finland, Denmark, Netherlands
Housing First as a national strategy in principle	France, Ireland, Luxembourg
Housing First in coordinated programmes and networks	Belgium, Italy, Spain, Sweden
Housing First in small-scale local and not coordinated initiatives	Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Portugal, UK
No Housing First	Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia

Generally speaking, Housing First is adopted in various forms in 17 out of 28 EU countries. It is at the base of national official strategies on homelessness mainly in Northern Europe. With the partial exception of Hungary and Poland, it is still unknown in Eastern Europe, while it is adopted with different degrees in Central and Southern European countries. Six European countries refer to Housing First in their national strategy on homelessness, namely Finland, Denmark, Netherlands, France, Ireland and Luxembourg (FEANTSA, 2011; Padgett et al., 2016). The most resolute country in opting for Housing First is Finland, whose national strategy to reduce homelessness is explicitly based on Housing First and permanent housing since 2008 (FEANTSA, 2011). The national government, using funds from the national lottery, transformed previous collective accommodations, like night shelters and hostels, into individual housing units (Padgett et al., 2016). The consequent downward trend in homelessness in Finland has been demonstrated by consistent data collection over time (Fitzpatrick et al., 2012). In Denmark, the national strategy established in 2009 focuses on implementation of Housing First initiatives in 17 municipalities (out of 98) funded through national and local budget. The plan is to extend the Housing First approach to other 23 municipalities (Benjaminsen, 2013). In the Netherlands, Housing First is not explicitly mentioned in the national strategy, but a clear focus on support in permanent housing is observable since 2011. 17 Housing First projects are currently running in the country. France and Ireland also base their national strategy on conversion to the Housing First approach. However, the concrete commitments to implement the strategy are in both cases rather vague and services implementation, as well as data collection and monitoring, are deficient (Fitzpatrick et al., 2012). The French coordinated programme, called *Un Chez-Soi d'abord*,

began in 2011, has been funded by the national government with around 6.5 million euros and has housed around 800 people in four cities: Paris, Marseille, Toulouse and Lille (Padgett et al., 2016). Despite being a rather large-scale programme compared to other European initiatives, it has not converted into a nation-wide mainstream policy. In Ireland, Housing First is a general statement in the national strategy, but it remains undefined in policy, with only a demonstrative project being carried out in Dublin since 2011. The national strategy issued by Luxembourg in 2013 is based on the Housing First approach, but it is at its piloting phase, with an experimental project for 15 homeless people set up in 2014. National programmes or networks to promote Housing First have been established in four EU countries in the recent years. In Belgium a national programme for testing the implementation of Housing First projects in eight cities have been working since 2013, and houses 350 people; it is co-financed by the federal government and a private foundation and is implemented by local NGOs<sup>16</sup>. In Italy, a national network including municipalities and third sector organisations interested in Housing First has been established in 2014 by FIO.psd, the Italian umbrella organisation of third sector organisations working on homelessness. The network has the aim of defining an Italian approach to Housing First and providing support to local public and private organisations for the implementation of local projects. 35 pilot projects have been implemented hitherto addressing 200 people<sup>17</sup>. In Spain, a national programme led and financed by a private foundation is testing the implementation of Housing First in three cities (Barcelona, Madrid and Malaga), with a total of 38 apartments available<sup>18</sup>. In Sweden, a national programme has been promoted by the University of Lund since 2009, with the aim to promote a Swedish approach to Housing First and support municipalities willing to test pilot projects with the design, monitoring and evaluation of the initiatives. Hitherto eight projects have been implemented (Padgett et al., 2016). In seven countries Housing First is tested locally through small-scale pilot projects, without a supra-local coordination neither by the state nor by private actors. It is the case of Vienna and Salzburg in Austria, Rijeka and Split in Croatia, Brno in Czech Republic, Budapest in Hungary, Nowe and Kielce in Poland, Lisbon in Portugal (a very influential project in Europe). The UK is a special case: Housing First is not mentioned in the national strategy, although supported housing is a traditional cornerstone of national policy on homelessness. An official coordinated programme promoting Housing First is not established, but a number of local projects are implemented in several UK cities.

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<sup>16</sup> [www.housingfirstbelgium.be](http://www.housingfirstbelgium.be)

<sup>17</sup> [www.housingfirstitalia.org](http://www.housingfirstitalia.org)

<sup>18</sup> [https://raisfundacion.org/en/what\\_we\\_do/habitat](https://raisfundacion.org/en/what_we_do/habitat)

No initiatives referring to the Housing First model are reported in Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia. In Germany Housing First is not explicitly adopted, but a well-established system of supported housing providing homeless people with long-term housing solution is, at least officially, implemented since the 1990s. More detailed information about the diffusion of Housing First in the five selected countries of this research (Austria, Hungary, Italy, Sweden and the UK) is provided in chapter three.

As evident from this overview, a prominent role in the promotion of Housing First in Europe has been played by FEANTSA, the European umbrella organisation representing the interests of the third sector organisations working with the homeless in Europe. Its role in advocating for Housing First, producing evidence base and supporting the establishment of European and national networks has been crucial. FEANTSA is also the compiler of the ETHOS typology, the most influential definition of homelessness in Europe. Such a definition, extensively described in chapter one, has been built to promote an idea of homelessness as caused by both individual frailties and structural failures and identifies four categories of homeless people: roofless and houseless people (primary homelessness), people living in insecure or inadequate housing (secondary homelessness). Such a wide conception of homelessness does not fit with the original focus of Housing First, which is chronic primary homelessness associated with mental illness, a small part of the homeless population as conceived by ETHOS. As described in chapter one, access to affordable housing for vulnerable groups is a major concern throughout Europe, and this influence the way Housing First services are conceived and implemented. Some projects strictly follow the principles and operational guidelines of Pathways Housing First, others use the label Housing First but differ under many aspects from the original model. As mentioned in the previous section, the issue of diversification amongst Housing First services emerged within the United States and was exacerbated by European implementations.

### **2.3 Redefining the scope of Housing First: on fidelity and target groups**

A good deal of confusion surrounds Housing First, when coming to its concrete implementation around the world. A large number of services, programmes and projects present themselves as Housing First but their adherence to the original model is contested. This model drift (Pleace and Bretherton, 2013) is partly inevitable, since national and local contexts require some tailoring to meet local needs and consider specific sets of constraints

and opportunities, in terms of legislative framework, organisation of social and health services, housing markets (Atherton and McNaughton Nicholls, 2008; Busch-Geertsema, 2013). However, it raises important issues of fidelity and diversification: to what extent services not complying with all the principles of Pathways should be labelled as Housing First? Is there a one-and-only Housing First or different versions are envisageable? Is there a European way of implementing Housing First services?

A checklist, listing the essential ingredients of Pathways to Housing, has been published in Tsemberis' manual. It comprises 38 items organised in five areas: housing choice and structure, separation of housing and services, service philosophy, service array, programme structure (Tsemberis, 2010, pp. 215-217). The checklist has been refined, tested and validated as a proper fidelity scale by Stefancic et al. (2013). A service should therefore comply with these 38 items to be labelled as Housing First, although the same compilers advocate for a not too strict use of the fidelity scale, admitting that local contexts play an important role in shaping the implementation of the model. The ways out from this impasse are mainly two: Housing First can be considered as a sector, including the Pathways to Housing's model and other versions; or it can be considered as a specific practice strictly referring to the Pathways' model, and as a part of a broader sector which should be named somehow else. Both conceptions need to start from a definition of the core principles defining what should be included in the Housing First sector or in the broader sector including Housing First. The main difference is that, in the first case, the non-compliance with some of the principles does not necessarily prevent services from using the label Housing First; in the second case, it does. The most advanced attempt of conceptually defining Housing First as a sector including different services has been made by Nicholas Pleace (Pleace, 2011; 2012; Pleace and Bretherton, 2013). He first identifies the core features which all services to be included in the Housing First sector should possess: enabling choice as regards the extent of support to receive, providing intensive and open-ended support, targeting chronically homeless people, using a harm reduction approach, separating housing and services. All services not meeting these basic requirements should not be included in the Housing First sector. It is therefore made clear, amongst the rest, that services targeted to others than chronically homeless people should not be included in the Housing First sector. The selection of the essential features draws on the literature on Housing First but it is not explained why, for instance, it explicitly encompasses just four of the eight basic principles proposed by Tsemberis and why it does not consider the attempts of building fidelity scales in the definition of the basic features.

Within the Housing First sector (i.e. amongst the services presenting the above mentioned basic features), Pleace (2012) identifies three types of services: Pathways Housing First, Communal Housing First and Housing First Light. The typology is based on the extent and type of the services offered, as displayed in Table 2.4.

**Table 2.4.** Broad types of Housing First services.

<b>Service offered</b>	<b>PHF</b>	<b>CHF</b>	<b>HFL</b>
Housing with security of tenure in private rented sector or in social housing immediately or as soon as possible	Yes	No	Yes
Offers communal housing (single rooms or apartments) with security of tenure provided immediately in a building only lived in by homeless people using the services	No	Yes	No
Homeless people have to stop using drugs	No	No	No
Homeless people have to stop drinking alcohol	No	No	No
Homeless people have to use mental health services	No	No	No
Harm reduction approach	Yes	Yes	Yes
Uses mobile teams to provide services	Yes	No	Yes
Directly provides drug and alcohol services	Yes	Yes	No
Directly provides psychiatric and medical services	Yes	Yes	No
Uses service brokerage	Yes	Yes	Yes
Provides support to promote housing stability	Yes	No	Yes

*Source: Pleace, 2012, p. 5*

Pathways Housing First is the most complete type of service, providing housing stability and a separate intensive social support which includes housing, psychiatric, medical and substance abuse services. In Housing First Light the main difference regards social and health services, which are not directly provided by the programme. In some cases, services included in this group were already in place before the global diffusion of the label Housing First, e.g. in the UK and Germany. In Communal Housing First, housing is not provided in scattered-site independent dwellings but in communal buildings with single rooms or apartments. Services are therefore provided directly on site and not through mobile teams. Communal Housing First is extensively implemented in Finland. The inclusion of Communal Housing First within the Housing First sector is rather problematic, since the provision of scattered-site independent housing is a core principle of Housing First according to Tsemberis (2010). In Pleace's typology it is not explained why it is not considered as an essential principle, while others (e.g. separation of housing and services, consumer choice, harm reduction and a potentially life-long commitment with clients) are.

The second conception shares with the previous one the idea that a new sector within homelessness services has been *de facto* established since the boom of the Housing First



model. Yet, it is not correct to name the whole sector as Housing First. Only Pathways Housing First and services strictly adopting all its principles should be classified as Housing First. Other services referring to the original model but not implementing all the principles should be included within the broader definition of housing-led services. The term housing-led has become popular in Europe since its conception in the already mentioned report of the European Consensus Conference on Homelessness, where it is defined as including “all policy approaches that identify the provision and/or sustaining of stable housing with security of tenure as the initial step in resolving or preventing situations of homelessness” (ECCH, 2011, p. 14). Two important elements of this definition shall be highlighted. First, the provision of a stable housing *with security of tenure* is a basic feature of any housing-led service. This means that the provision of an independent dwelling is not enough: it must be permanent and the tenant must enjoy full tenancy rights. This definition would exclude the Communal Housing First services from the range of services to be included in a potential sector grouping all housing-led services. Second, the housing-led approach is also a strategy for prevention of homelessness, that is, it is not necessarily targeted to chronically homeless people, but addresses “***all*** forms of homelessness” (ECCH, 2011, p. 14, italic bold in the text), including people at risk of homelessness living in insecure or inadequate housing or due to be released from institutions. This enlargement of the target population of housing-led services is endorsed by the final report of the Housing First Europe project: “There is no reason why other homeless people with less severe support needs should have to endure preparatory periods of several years before they are re-housed, if the necessary support can just as easily and much more effectively be provided in regular permanent housing” (Busch-Geertsema, 2013, p. 325). Again, this is in contrast with Pleace’s typology, which only includes services targeted at chronically homeless people. As evident, there is a certain deal of confusion around the definition of Housing First, its core principles and boundaries. We still lack a theoretically and methodologically sound classification of services inspired by the Housing First boom in the last decade, but also of similar services already in place. However, the conception of Housing First as a well-defined service model within a broader range of housing-led services suits well for the purposes of this research. It highlights the centrality of tenure security within the regular housing market, it encompasses a broad target population including all forms of homelessness, and it well fits the theoretical framework of the ETHOS typology presented in chapter one.

## 2.4 The housing in Housing First: issues at stake

The aim of this work is to describe and assess the potential impact of Housing First on structural provision of access to stable and affordable housing to homeless people. Hence, we briefly report the main issues at stake regarding the relationship between the Housing First approach and the housing field. Actually, very few has been written on this relationship. Research on Housing First has almost entirely concentrated on socio-economic relevant issues, like Housing First's alleged incapacity of solving structural poverty and unemployment and difficulty in breaking social isolation and promoting social integration (Atherton and McNaughton Nicholls, 2008; Pleace, 2011; 2013). The first principle of Housing First (housing as a basic human right) has hardly been analysed in its possible consequences on the long-term discussion on housing systems, and in relationship with the features of contemporary housing markets and policies. Drawing on the existing literature review on Housing First integrated with the framework provided in chapter one, we identify four major issues concerning the housing field.

### *The centrality of housing*

Housing First “places housing at the very centre of the debate” (Busch-Geertsema, 2012, p. 213). Indeed, its first basic principle, housing as a human right, sheds light on the long-standing debate on the right to housing and on the role of housing in welfare states (Bengtsson, 2001; Filipović Hrast, 2014). Should housing be a universal social right? Should it be placed at the very centre of the welfare state instead of being treated as its wobbly pillar (Torgersen, 1987)? Should anybody be given a house? Only the homeless? Only the chronic homeless?

### *Availability of affordable housing*

As extensively described in chapter one, global, national and local configurations and outcomes of housing markets play a critical role in determining the availability of affordable housing, especially for low-income households and socially vulnerable groups. These structural constraints also affect the implementation of Housing First programmes and project, mainly in two sense: the availability of apartments on local markets for housing the homeless and their location. Many Housing First initiatives report difficulties in finding apartments for their users, included the original programme in New York City, characterised by a very tight

and expensive housing market (Atherton and McNaughton Nicholls, 2008). This results in non-optimal distribution of Housing First tenancies, which tend to be located in the lower-cost city districts, often in outer suburbs. These problems are likely to become critical if Housing First has to become a mainstream policy strategy: as pointed out by Pleace (2011), the mainstreaming of Housing First would entail the finding of sufficient housing for the several hundreds of thousands of people experiencing homelessness in Europe.

### *Competing needs and equality in access to housing*

Behind availability, access to affordable housing is another critical point. Access to housing is usually regulated by public housing policy, which determines allocation criteria for public houses and can also promote or hinder access to private housing by means of different policy tools, some of which are described in chapter two. Housing First raises a clear issue of equity, promoting direct access to housing to someone in a situation of high competition between different groups for accessing a scarce resource like affordable housing. In some cases, users of Housing First projects are assigned a socially rented dwelling, jumping the often interminable queue that includes all other eligible households. In others, thanks to the mediation of the agencies running the Housing First project, they get access to a privately rented dwelling at a very favourable price, in some cases for free.

### *Tenure security*

Housing First should grant to its users tenure security, that is a permanent housing where they can enjoy full tenancy rights. As described in chapter one, the degree of tenure security varies from country to country and also locally. Broadly speaking, two major conditions that can lead to the loss of tenancy are being in rent arrears and causing severe disturbances or damages. Housing First generally protects the users from being in arrears, by providing economic and social support. Due to various reasons, homeless people, especially chronically homeless people living on the streets or in emergency accommodations for a long time, are rather exposed to the risk of losing tenancy because of severe disturbances caused to the neighbours or severe damages caused to the dwelling by them or their friends.

### **3. Housing First in Europe: contexts and practices**

This chapter describes the field research, by providing insights on the most relevant methodological aspects and a detailed description of the case studies of this research, all initiatives implementing Housing First in five European cities: Bologna, in Italy; Budapest, in Hungary; London, in the UK; Stockholm, in Sweden; and Vienna, in Austria.

#### **3.1 A methodological note**

This research is a comparative multiple case-study research. It is comparative because it is aimed at making emerge similarities and differences among units of analysis and contexts (Clasen, 2004). Indeed, the purpose of the research is analysing the potential of Housing First for including homeless people in the housing market under different contextual conditions, which is consistently studied by comparing both contextual conditions and coping strategies of initiatives implementing Housing First. It is a case-study research because it adopts case studies as its main strategy to collect and produce knowledge on the research object. Two reasons underlie this methodological choice. First, few grounded knowledge on the object of the research, that is on how Housing First practices actually deal with some housing-related issues, was available; in this respect, case studies are considered as a valid strategy to approach an under investigated object and go deep in exploring phenomenon, contents and practices (Yin, 2003; Clasen, 2004; Flyvbjerg, 2006). Second, for the purposes of the research it was of extreme importance to study the object of the research in its context, that is the kind of value a case-study strategy can give. A case study is indeed defined as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2003: 13), especially suitable to produce context-dependent knowledge (Flyvbjerg, 2006). This latter characteristic, of being a strategy to grasp phenomena in their contexts, is particularly relevant for the purposes of this research, aimed at comparing both projects and contexts. It is a multiple case-study research since it studies more than one units of analysis, exactly five. The units of analysis are projects implementing Housing First embedded in their context.

The five initiatives have been selected within the framework of a broader research project called *Poverty Reduction in Europe: Social Policy and Innovation (ImPRovE)*<sup>19</sup>. The ImPRovE project was led by a consortium of ten European research centres coordinated by the Herman Deleeck Centre for Social Policy of the University of Antwerp, and co-financed by the 7th Framework Programme of the European Commission. The project ran from March 2012 to February 2016 and its main research questions concerned the achievement of social cohesion in Europe and the role of social innovation in complementing, reinforcing and modifying macro-level policies. Within this framework, a research team composed by researchers from three institutes, namely the Centre on Inequality, Poverty, Social Exclusion and the City of the University of Antwerp, the Institute for Multilevel Governance and Development of the Vienna University of Economics and Business, and the Department of Economics, Society and Politics of the University of Urbino Carlo Bo, selected and conducted 31 case studies of socially innovative practices in seven European countries and Brazil. Six out of these 31 case studies regarded initiatives implementing Housing First in Europe. This research on the potential of Housing First for the housing inclusion of the homeless is embedded in this path. This circumstance has its pros and cons. The pros mainly regard the extent and wealth of the material I could draw on to feed the research. I would not have had the resources alone, in terms of knowledge, experience, network, time and finance, to collect such insightful information about projects carried out in five different European cities. The cons regard mainly three aspects. First, the case studies have been selected according to the criteria established by the research team of the ImPRovE project, and not according to criteria established within the realm of this research. However, the selection criteria of ImPRovE have proved to be valid also for this research. Second, the conduction of the case studies has been informed by the research objectives and questions of the ImPRovE research, and not of this research, with a focus on governance aspects of the initiatives more than on housing-related issues. This is the major methodological caveat we must be aware about this research. Some information about housing-related issues was missing in the material collected during the field research. I tried to fix this drawback by re-contacting, where possible, the contact persons of the case studies but, on most issues, I had to draw on the information collected during the field research. Third, I have not personally conducted the field research in all the cities of the research: I was personally involved in the field research in two out of five case studies. In three cases, the field research was conducted by my colleagues in the ImPRovE research

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<sup>19</sup> <http://improve-research.eu/>

team. However, I could draw on information collected by colleagues under the same research protocol, with a shared methodological background, the same track for interviews and focus groups and the same schemes to analyse and report the collected material.

The selection process of the ImPRovE project was consistent with the basic criteria I would have used to independently select case studies for this research. In particular, projects implemented in contexts framed by different welfare regimes were selected by the ImPRovE team, which is of interest also for the purposes of this research, especially if we consider that those projects were also framed by different housing regimes, which is of major interest in the context of this research. The major impact of inheriting the selection process from ImPRovE was on the choice of the countries and cities. As for countries, it would have been of a certain value to select cases in countries where Housing First has been mainstreamed as a policy strategy orienting national strategies on homelessness, like Finland, Denmark or the Netherlands (see table 2.3 in chapter 2.2.2). As for cities, a balanced selection between capital cities (Budapest, London, Stockholm and Vienna) and not capital but large cities (Bologna and Ghent) was made, albeit the case study of Ghent was dropped by my research. At the time of the selection (early 2013), there were not so many cities where a Housing First project was running: as far as I know, Budapest and Bologna were the only city in Hungary and Italy, London had by far the most developed project in England, Vienna was the only city in Austria together with Salzburg, and Stockholm was the most advanced of the seven projects implemented in Sweden. As a result of this selection process, these five projects and their contexts were selected.

**Table 3.1.** Selection of countries, cities and projects.

<b>Housing regime<sup>20</sup></b>	<b>Welfare regime<sup>21</sup></b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Project</b>
Unitary	Corporatist	Austria	Vienna	Housing First Vienna
	Social Democratic	Sweden	Stockholm	Bostad Först i Stockholms
Dual	Transition	Hungary	Budapest	Housing First Budapest
	Familistic	Italy	Bologna	Tutti a casa
	Liberal	UK	London	Camden Housing First

Access to the field has been granted by identifying a contact person for each case study. During a first meeting, a list of possible people to be interviewed was agreed between the researcher and the contact person, whose engagement in organising meetings and promoting

<sup>20</sup> Kemeny, 1995; 2001; 2006

<sup>21</sup> Esping-Andersen, 1990; 1999

the research to other key persons in the project was verified. Only people involved in the governance of the projects were considered for the research, pertaining to both the leading organisations and the partner organisations including i.e.: project managers, team coordinators, social workers, key persons in strategic partner organisations. Users of the projects were not involved in the research.

The data collection methods include: document analysis, interviews and focus groups. Document analysis consists of a detailed study of both public and private documents related to each Housing First initiative. Public documents include: web sites or web pages of the initiatives; web sites of the organisations involved in the initiatives; formal agreements between organisations managing the initiatives; evaluation reports; leaflets and brochures. They also include documents on the contexts of the initiatives, namely: laws, statistics, public strategies, reports. Private documents include documents provided by the contact persons of the case studies: plan of the initiatives; internal reports; internal agreements; internal evaluations. Three to five qualitative semi-structured interviews have been conducted for each case study. The ImPROvE researchers in charge of conducting the interviews shared a common track with a list of guiding questions organised in five sections: presentation of the interviewee and the organisation; history of the initiative; description of the initiative, in terms of purpose, structure and operation; relationship with the territory and governance assets; the innovative dimension of the initiative. Those questions served as a guide for the interviewer, but were not binding, and new questions originated by the particular interaction with each interviewee may be added. This choice derives from the conceptualisation of the qualitative interview as a social relationship (Seidman, 2006, quoted in Yin, 2010). Respondents were people involved in the management of the initiatives pertaining to the leading organisations and to the partner organisations. A focus group was also conducted for each case study, involving five to ten people participating in the management of the initiatives. The focus groups were conducted by asking the participants to discuss on the main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the initiatives, referring to the SWOT matrix as formulated by Albert Humphrey and his colleagues at the Stanford University in late 1960s. Consistently with the methodological premises of this research, the SWOT matrix has been used to get insights on the relationships between the initiatives implementing Housing First and the context where they are embedded. After a round of presentations, the moderator of the focus groups opened a discussion on the main strengths and weaknesses of the initiative according to the participants. In the second half of the focus groups, a similar discussion on

opportunities and threats posed by the context to the development of the initiatives was made. This was intended also to provide the participants with useful insights on the main strengths and criticalities of the project they were managing in relation with the context. The moderator intervened as few as possible, guaranteeing that all the four elements of the SWOT matrix were equally discussed. Both the interviews and the focus groups were recorded and fully transcribed in text. Evidence deriving from the three sources was triangulated in order to determine whether data from one source were confirmed by the other two sources. Drawing on the data collected through document analysis, interviews and focus groups, a report for each case study has been drafted, following a common template which included information on: the context framing the initiative; the genesis and history of the initiative; its purposes, organisation, target group and activities; its socially innovative aspects; the institutional governance system managing the initiative; the way the initiative dealt with some governance challenges previously identified by the ImPRovE research team.

The collected data were analysed by using not specialised software programs, such as Word and Excel, which according to some methodologists can support “nearly the entire process of analysing qualitative data” (Yin, 2010: 180). It followed the five-phased cycle proposed by Yin (2010): compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding. The result of the first three phases was a database in which the collected data were systematically organised. The database included two sets of records. The first organised general information on the case studies: name, leading organisation, partner organisations, time, funding organisations and mechanisms, target group, housing provision, social support provision, other activities, composition of the team, relevant historical developments, other relevant notes. The second organised information related to the housing dimension of the initiatives: target group (type and number and requirements), housing provision (type of housing provider, number of apartments, type of apartments, location), housing costs (rents and other expenses), tenure security (duration of the contracts, legal holder of the contract, conditions for being evicted), strategies to procure apartments, comments of the interviewees on the housing dimension, comments of the interviewees on the relationship between initiative and context, other relevant notes on the housing dimension. This operation was made on primary sources (interviews and focus groups) for the case studies of Bologna and Stockholm, and on secondary sources (the case study report) for the case studies of Budapest, London and Vienna. This database and the reports of the case studies provided the basis for the descriptive interpretation of the data in continuous interaction with the proposed



theoretical framework, and for the conclusion, aimed at proposing actions at the policy level and identifying issues to be addressed by further research.

The five case studies are extensively described in the following sections of this chapter. Each Housing First initiative is firstly presented within its national and local context, highlighting specific issues of housing and homelessness and opportunities and constraints set by the local contexts to the development of Housing First practices. Secondly, a description of the local initiative is provided, including information on the genesis of the project, the timing, the target group, the governance asset, the funding, the modalities of housing provision and the organisation of social support. Finally, some relevant issues regarding the housing dimension are highlighted and serve as a basis for the comparative analysis provided in chapter four. Tables 3.1 and 3.2 summarise the main features of the case studies.

**Table 3.1.** Main features of the five case studies/1.

Name	Place	Time	Leading organisation	Main partner organisations	Funding organisation	Annual Budget
Tutti a casa	Bologna, Italy	2012-2014 <sup>1</sup>	Third sector organisation	Municipality	Bank foundation	20,000 € <sup>2</sup>
Housing First Budapest	Budapest, Hungary	2013-ongoing	Third sector organisation	Municipality, international NGO	International NGO, private foundation	Unknown
Camden Housing First	London, UK	2012-2014 <sup>3</sup>	Third sector organisation	City District	City District	45,000 £ <sup>4</sup>
Bostad Först i Stockholms Stad	Stockholm, Sweden	2010-2014 <sup>5</sup>	Municipality	Municipal housing company, TSO, University	Municipality	Unknown
Housing First Vienna	Vienna, Austria	2012-ongoing	Third sector organisation	Municipal agency	Municipal agency	490,000 €

<sup>1</sup> The Municipality of Bologna implemented Housing First as a service since 2014.

<sup>2</sup> 167,000 € in the new municipal service.

<sup>3</sup> A second edition of the project, managed by another organisation, started in 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Around 52,000 € (exchange rate 16<sup>th</sup> August 2016).

<sup>5</sup> A second edition of the project started in 2014 and is ongoing.

*Sources: Saruis, Colombo and Kazepov, 2016; Bernát and Kubik, 2015; Cools and Oosterlynck, 2015; Colombo, Saruis and Kazepov, 2016; Wukovitsch, Novy and Weinzierl, 2015.*

**Table 3.2.** Main features of the five case studies/2.

Name	Place	Target group	Number	Housing provision	Social support
Tutti a casa	Bologna, Italy	Chronic homeless people; Families with children (no substance users)	23 people	Private market	Mobile, open-ended, 24/7, intensive community integration, not entirely separated from housing
Housing First Budapest	District of Köbánya, Budapest, Hungary	Homeless people settled in a forest in the district	8 people	Municipal social housing	Not enough information
Camden Housing First	District of Camden, London, UK	Homeless people with mental illness and/or substance abuse	10 people	Private market	Mobile, 24/7, harm reduction, separated from housing, not open-ended
Bostad Först i Stockholms Stad	Stockholm, Sweden	Chronic homeless people with mental illness and/or substance abuse	35 people	Municipal public housing	Mobile, open-ended, 24/7, harm reduction, separated from housing
Housing First Vienna	Vienna, Austria	Homeless people and people at risk of homelessness	69 households	Private market and social housing	Highly individualised, separated from housing, not open-ended

*Sources: Saruis, Colombo and Kazepov, 2016; Bernát and Kubik, 2015; Cools and Oosterlynck, 2015; Colombo, Saruis and Kazepov, 2016; Wukovitsch, Novy and Weinzierl, 2015.*

## 3.2 Housing First in Bologna, Italy<sup>22</sup>

### 3.2.1 Housing and homelessness in Bologna and Italy

Italian housing policy has been characterised since the 1970s by a policy preference towards home ownership, which has historically represented an asset-building strategy and a pillar of the family-based Italian welfare system: around 40 per cent of the housing stock is allocated by families, mainly in the form of intergenerational transmission (Baldini and Poggio, 2014). Consistently with this policy framework, home ownership accounts for 67 per cent of the housing stock, while the rental sector is at 22 per cent, sharply declining from the

<sup>22</sup> The case study was conducted between February and July 2014. Where not otherwise specified, information derives from the research report drafted for the ImPROvE project (Saruis, Colombo and Kazepov, 2016).

36 per cent of the 1980. Only 5.5 per cent of the housing stock is devoted to social housing. It is targeted to low-income households and is mainly managed by municipalities. Access is means-tested, with tight criteria for social and economic needs. The turnover rate is extremely low, with many tenants remaining in social housing all life, regardless of changes in their social and economic conditions. This explains the overrepresentation of elderly people in Italian social housing, together with households with disabled persons, as reported in table 3.3.

**Table 3.3.** Profile of households living in social housing in Italy

	Number	% on total*
Income <10,000 €	660,000	33.0 %
Elderly people	413,000	20.7 %
Disabled people	145,000	7.3 %
Immigrants	142,000	7.1%

\* Around 2 million people live in social housing in Italy.

*Source: Federcasa, 2014.*

Housing allowances traditionally played a very limited role in the Italian housing system: both their coverage (about 5 per cent of tenants) and their compensatory effect are very limited. Furthermore, in 2012 transfers to the beneficiaries have been constrained by the available budget. The result is a growing policy fragmentation, since many municipalities have cancelled the scheme while others continue to finance it without the participation of the state and of the regions. In the last 20 years, rents have increased by 64.4 per cent on average. The average annual rent in the private rental sector is 6,456 Euros, while it is substantially lower, 1,262 Euros, in the social housing sector. A rent regulation system does not exist in Italy, except for a limited quota of “assisted tenancies”, representing less than 20 per cent of the private rental sector (Bianchi, 2014). The private rental market has been liberalised in the 1990s, cancelling the previous fair rent regime and worsening the affordability of rented housing in the country. Tenancy protection in Italy is rather strong, although there is a broad unregulated black market where rules do not apply. The standard duration of the contract in the private rental sector is 4+4, which means four years automatically renewed for other four years if no one of the two parts requires the dismissal of the tenancy. In the social housing sector the contract is unlimited and it is very difficult to evict tenants. Evictions are rather difficult also in the private sector, where it is particularly complicated to apply orders of evictions, with a time between the notice and the effective eviction, which can reach 18 months. 36,083 executed evictions have been reported in the country in 2014, 89.3 per cent of

which have been due to rent arrears (Ministero dell'Interno, 2015). 20.6 per cent of households in social housing were in rent arrears in 2011, growing from 15 per cent in 2001 (Federcasa, 2014). 1,500 executed evictions have been reported in the city of Bologna in 2014 (Ministero dell'Interno, 2015).

50,724 homeless people have been reported in Italy by a research conducted by the National Institute for Statistics in collaboration with the national umbrella organisation (Istat, 2014). It is 0.24 per cent of the population, which is a rather high percentage compared to other countries. However, data on homelessness are actually not comparable, because of structural differences in the collection of data. In the case of Italy, the survey considered as homeless people attending dedicated services like canteens, night shelters and outreach support. The vast majority of homeless people are men (85.7 per cent), with a prevalence of foreign homeless people (58.2 per cent). 21.4 per cent of homeless people are in this condition since more than four years, 41.1 per cent since more than two years, and 17.4 per cent since less than three months. 17.4 per cent of them have no source of income, 28 per cent earn their income from work, 19.7 from social benefits (included pensions), 32.7 per cent from family members or friends. 23.7 per cent of the Italian homeless population live in Milan, 15.2 per cent in Rome. 2 per cent of the Italian homeless population live in Bologna, that is 1,032 people. 51.6 per cent of them are foreign citizens.

Italy does not have a national homelessness strategy, although a text establishing national guidelines for tackling homelessness and defining criteria and quality standards for service provision to homeless people has been issued in 2015 by the central government, in collaboration with regions and the national umbrella organisation representing third sector organisations working with the homeless. The text commits both the central state and the regions to the establishment and implementation of actions to prevent and combat severe poverty and homelessness based on the guidelines. The regulation and financing of services to homeless people is organised at the regional level, with municipalities in charge of the provision of services, dominated by the staircase approach. However, a national network on Housing First<sup>23</sup> has been established in 2014 and is turning into a very effective player in the diffusion of Housing First at the local level, but also in the lobbying action towards the national government. The network is coordinated by FIO.psd, the national umbrella organisation of third sector organisations working on homelessness, and includes 52

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<sup>23</sup> [www.housingfirstitalia.org](http://www.housingfirstitalia.org)

members, municipalities and third sector organisations interested in Housing First. The network has the aim of defining an Italian approach to Housing First and providing support to local public and private organisations for the implementation of local projects. 33 pilot projects, in 10 regions and 20 municipalities, have been implemented hitherto, addressing 510 people in 176 apartments. 60 per cent of the apartments are found in the private rental market, 21 per cent is owned by the Church, 19 per cent is part of the social housing sector. Housing First projects in Italy mainly house men (68 per cent of the beneficiaries) and Italian nationals (70 per cent), with an average age of 50 years.

Bologna is a medium-sized city of 387,000 inhabitants located in the region of Emilia Romagna, in the centre of Italy. The total city housing stock roughly corresponds to the number of households living in the city, that is almost 200,000 (Comune di Bologna, 2014). In the local housing market, the rental sector is broader than the national average, accounting for 30 per cent of the housing stock, with home ownership at 62 per cent. In 2012, the waiting list for social housing contained 8,485 applications, with around 400 houses assigned every year by the Municipality (Comune di Bologna, 2014). 1,032 people have been reported as homeless in the city (Istat, 2014). Emilia Romagna is regarded as a model in Italy as far as social policies are concerned. The Region provides specific funds for fighting poverty and social exclusion. The Municipality of Bologna has a long tradition of civic participation in the design and implementation of public policies. In the field of poverty and homelessness, a permanent council involving both local politicians and members of civil society representing more than one hundred third sector organisation has been established in 1990. Social services are regulated at the municipal level, and are delivered by the six districts in which the city is administratively organised. Homelessness services based on the staircase model in the city are organised in five typologies, for a total capacity of accommodation of 294 to 544 people, as reported in table 3.4. They are all publicly financed and managed by third sector organisations.

**Table 3.4.** Number of places in different services for homeless people in Bologna.

Type of service	Number	Places	Notes
Emergency night shelter	2	72	Max. 15 days, direct access
Emergency winter night shelter	n.a.	250	Only during winter, direct access
Transitional collective accommodation	3	96	3-6 months, access mediated by social services
Temporary collective accommodation	2	98	6+6 months, access mediated by social services bound on the acceptance of an individual plan
Temporary housing in group apartments	5	28	Access bounded on the acceptance of an advanced individual plan

Source: Saruis et al., 2015

### 3.2.2 Genesis and description of the Housing First project in Bologna

*Tutti a casa* (All at home) is regarded as one of the first initiatives implementing Housing First in Italy. It was officially established in 2012 by the third sector organisation *Piazza Grande*. *Piazza Grande* is a peculiar case in the Italian panorama of organisations working on homelessness, since it has been co-founded and managed by homeless people themselves. Its story starts in 1993 with the publication of a street magazine, called itself *Piazza Grande*, written and distributed by homeless people living in Bologna. The association was officially established in 1994, thanks to the support of CGIL, the major Italian trade union. Self-organisation and mutual support are its basic principles, to the point that it has developed the methodology of peer support, with ex homeless people being involved in the provision of services. It has gradually become a well-established service provider in the context of Bologna, without losing its grass-roots origin and vocation to denounce and public mobilisation. The project was established with the funding of a Bank Foundation, the *Fondazione Del Monte* of Bologna, which issues twice a year a public call for supporting local non-profit organisations. The origins of the initiative date back to 2010, when *Piazza Grande* started a profound re-organisation to overcome the financial and management difficulties it was facing since some years. New managers were hired to search for new solutions to combine support to homeless people and financial sustainability. Fortnight discussion groups among the social workers of the association led by a psychiatrist were introduced to discuss criticalities and identify solutions. The group built a growing awareness on the inadequacy of night shelters and other collective emergency accommodations as a solution for homeless people. At the same time, a homeless crisis hit the city in spring 2010,

when the emergency winter shelters closed down. More than 50 homeless people slept in the main square of Bologna to protest against the lack of housing solutions. The association led the protest and managed to grasp the attention of local media. As a result, one of the shelters was re-opened, and a season of conflict between the association and the Municipality was inaugurated. In June 2011, a social worker of *Piazza Grande* participated in an international conference on homelessness held in Milan, where he came to know the experience of Housing First in Portugal and met the founder José Ornelas. Managers and workers of the association were enthusiastic about the Housing First model and started to study the literature and contact experts. A year later, in summer 2012, *Piazza Grande* obtained three apartments by a local municipal Foundation, which launched a competition for assigning a small number of apartments for social projects. The rent was for free, but the apartments had to be furnished and utilities had to be paid. The association assigned the three apartments to: a) a single homeless man sleeping in a shelter and working in a social cooperative; b) a single homeless man ex-drug consumer who was sleeping on the streets; and c) a family with a children, who was living in a temporary accommodation. The first months of the project were just about providing a house, without a clear methodology and planning for future steps. However, it is considered as a very fertile period to experiment on housing and social support, which will be crucial in the establishment of the local way to Housing First. At the end of 2012, a new funding opportunity by *Fondazione Del Monte* was seized by the association to propose a Housing First experimentation in the city, called *Tutti a casa*. The project was funded with 20,000 Euros, with further 8,000 Euros raised through a crowdfunding campaign aimed at providing a housing solution for a family with a minor child, who was living in a totally inadequate night shelter. *Tutti a casa* soon experienced the problem of finding available apartments, since the Municipality, which had initially agreed on the project, was not anymore in the condition of providing public housing for the project. Inspired by the experience of the Social Rental Agencies in Belgium, *Piazza Grande* rapidly built a network of private landlords available to rent apartments for the project, under the guarantee of the association, which would have become the contract holder, and offered a free of charge service of administrative support in the establishment and deposit of the rental agreement. An effective media campaign to convince owners to make their apartments available for the project was launched on local media. Some landlords were positively impressed by the possibility of having a stable rent granted by a well-known local association, having at disposal a free service to manage administrative tasks, and doing a socially valuable choice. With some houses available, the project could finally start its activities, which in its first

phase lasted until mid-2014. The Municipality of Bologna had been initially adverse to the project, also because of the conflict opened by *Piazza Grande* in the previous two years, which had been considered as an attack to the well-established local system of provision of social services, traditionally based on cooperation. Things started to change in April 2013, when a high representative of the municipality participated in an important national conference on homelessness, where Housing First was largely discussed and presented as a best practice. Since that moment, the municipality got convinced of the value of the initiative of *Tutti a casa*, which could also give value to the whole municipal homelessness services. The Municipality was gradually involved in the initiative, by participating in mixed discussion groups, where it got convinced in investing in Housing First. In August 2014, it issued a public tender for the assignment of the implementation and management of a Housing First service in Bologna. *Piazza Grande* won the competition and received 334,000 Euros for a period of two years to accommodate 64 people.

*Tutti a casa* is targeted to two groups: chronically single adult homeless people, living on the streets or in night shelters; and families with minor children, living in temporary unsafe accommodations. Hence, the target group is broader than the one of Pathways Housing First; it includes people with mental illness, but excludes active drug and/or alcohol addicted. In the pilot phase, the selection was made by the association, based on its personal knowledge of the issue and relationship with homeless people, with a high degree of discretionality. In the second phase, characterised by the direct involvement of the municipality, the selection is made within a mixed working group including social workers of both the municipality and *Piazza Grande*. A formal evaluation, including information collected by municipal social service, is made. The pilot project housed 23 people; other 64 people have been housed in the second phase of the project, for a total of 87 people. 65 per cent of them is reported as being ex-chronic homeless; 30 per cent receive psychiatric help; the average monthly income of the beneficiaries is around 300 Euros. Beyond families, also single people usually co-habit in the same house in groups of two or three flat mates.

Housing is mainly provided in scattered-site independent privately rented houses. At the beginning of the publicly funded service, the municipality made available four public apartments. Tenants are required to pay a social rent of 150 to 200 Euros, utilities included, for the apartments. This may represent a barrier for some homeless people and families, since they do not have any source of income, due to the lack of a minimum income scheme in Italy.



In those cases where an income deriving from work or social benefits is available, the rent can be paid by the beneficiaries, with a small integration from the municipality, if needed. In other cases, not to exclude all people with no income, the project provides intensive support for activating the beneficiaries in the labour market, through paid internships mainly in local social cooperatives, which are committed to dedicate special availability to Housing First tenants. This circumstance still represents a barrier for those homeless people with no income who are not in the condition to rapidly commit with a job activity. For instance, drug addicts, a major target group in the original Housing First model, are excluded from the project, since they are not considered as immediately employable. It also raises issues about the principle of separation between housing and social support, since in this case housing is *de facto* conditional on the adherence to active labour market initiatives. On the other hand, this has proved to be an effective instrument for promoting the social and economic integration of the beneficiaries, which is often a major criticality in many Housing First initiatives. The project fully covers the administrative expenses for registering the rental agreements. As aforementioned, the contract is made between the landlords and the association, which act as a guarantor for the landlords.

Social support is provided according to the Housing First principles, through weekly visits, fortnight group meetings and other personalised social and health support activities. It is available 24 hours a day 7 days a week, and its duration depends on the needs of each beneficiary. Social support and especially mental health support is provided as far as possible in the apartments. The team of *Tutti a casa* is composed by a coordinator, a psychiatrist, four social workers and four psychologists. In the second phase of the project, two working groups, one for each target group, have been established to coordinate the social support. Beyond the staff of *Piazza Grande*, the groups involve municipal social workers, both from central and decentralised services, and health workers of the local public Mental Health Centre. Two not foreseen activities have emerged during the pilot project. Drawing on the professionalism of a beneficiary, the service started to offer to the landlords basic renovation and ordinary maintenance activities in exchange for lower rents, and to the beneficiaries an opportunity of placement. Furthermore, a bottom-up assessment let emerge the need for more intensive community integration support. The association has thus developed a rather broad set of activities to facilitate the integration of the tenants in the neighbourhood where they are settled, ranging from walks around the neighbourhood to enrolment to sport activities and

inclusion in social centres for elderly people. Children of the involved families have furthermore free access to the after-school service managed by a local association.

### ***3.2.3 The housing in Housing First in Bologna: issues at stake***

#### *Housing availability and affordability*

An issue of availability of affordable apartments emerged at the beginning of the project, when the municipality decided not to make available public houses. A structural lack of social housing characterises the Italian and local housing market, with 8,485 people in the waiting list for social housing in Bologna. Promoters of Housing First in Bologna were able to overcome the initial difficulty and the structural unavailability of social housing by structuring an attractive service for private landlords. The service has been proposed as a way to collect stably and punctually the rent, thanks to the mediation of the leading association, which signs the contract on behalf of the beneficiaries, granting for them in case they fall into rent arrears. For some landlords, it is preferable to earn a lower rent rather than risking opening totally unreliable procedures for evictions in case of rent arrears. Furthermore, they receive in change the guarantee of regular payments and the sustainment of small renovation and maintenance activities by the side of the project. Finally, the association provides to all the administrative tasks to be accomplished to establish and manage a rental agreement. The service has been launched through a communication campaign in the local media, TVs and newspapers, which served as a further incentive for the landlords, who could feel part of the solution of a problem regarding their city. The service has proved to work well for the procurement of houses for the project. The price to be paid for having such an availability of apartments in the private rental market is a lowered tenure security, as described in the specific section.

#### *Competition and equality in access to housing*

Except for four symbolic apartments made available by the municipality to start up the second phase of the project, no public social housing is used for hosting the Housing First tenants. This avoids direct competition with individuals and social groups struggling for a social house in the long municipal waiting list. The issue is however not completely avoided, since those on the waiting list are not supported to access to a privately rented house, like Housing First tenants are. A possible positive effect of Housing First on the general local

system would be if the service of mediation with private landlords, allowing them to make apartments available at lower rents for social purposes, would be extended to the general housing services, and used, for instance, to propose affordable housing solutions to people on the waiting list.

### *Tenure security*

As aforementioned, a lowered tenure security is the price to be paid to have access to affordable apartments for the project. To make sure private landlords make available their houses for Housing First tenants, the contract is signed between the landlords and *Piazza Grande*. The beneficiaries are not legally entitled to any right connected with the house where they live. Although the association also grants for the continuity of the service to the beneficiaries, they are not legally provided with housing stability. Should the Housing First service stop for any reasons, they would not be legal conductors of a rental contract. In any case, unlimited contracts in the private rental sector are not the rule in Italy. A private tenant, thus also a Housing First tenant, at the most probable signs a contract for four years plus other four; it is thus structurally impossible to have a lifelong legal guarantee of housing stability for Housing First tenants in Italy, unless they get access to social housing, where unlimited contracts are the rule.

## **3.3 Housing First in Budapest, Hungary<sup>24</sup>**

### ***3.3.1 Housing and homelessness in Budapest and Hungary***

Hungary is a country of home owners. Home ownership accounts for 92 per cent of the total housing stock, and the data is continuously increasing since the 1980s. The rental sector, which accounted for 29 per cent of the stock in 1980, fall down to 7 per cent in 2011. This is mainly due to the massive privatisation of municipal housing stock during the 1990s, when tenants were offered the right to buy the houses where they were living. As a result, around 750,000 public houses were sold to their tenants, and the social housing sector now accounts for less than 4 per cent of the stock (Pittini et al., 2015). It is mainly concentrated in larger cities, especially in Budapest, where it accounts for 5.8 per cent of the housing stock (Hegedüs, 2014); it is owned and managed by municipalities and mainly hosts low income

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<sup>24</sup> The case study was conducted between May and July 2014. Where not otherwise specified, information derives from the research report drafted for the ImPROvE project (Bernát and Kubik, 2015).

households, especially single-parent households and Roma people. Social rents are set by municipalities and are substantially lower than private rents, with an average annual social rent of 9.8 €/m<sup>2</sup> against an average private rent of 28.3 €/m<sup>2</sup>, 40.8 in Budapest (Scanlon et al., 2014). In the last 20 years market rent prices have considerably increased, especially in the city of Budapest, also because of the lack of rent regulation in the country. Demand and supply do not converge in the national housing market: around 400,000 private houses are empty, but they are mainly properties with high market prices, whereas around 300,000 families in need are searching for affordable housing, but they are mainly low income people searching for low cost housing solutions (Habitat for Humanity Hungary, 2015). Moreover, private landlords are reported to be reluctant to rent apartments to tenants that do not prove sufficient reliability in paying rents (Habitat for Humanity Hungary, 2015). Following the privatisation of the 1990s, the municipalities remained with those apartments in the poorest conditions. Therefore renovation is a major issue in Hungary, since neither the municipalities nor the tenants have the financial resources to renovate the apartments. For this reason, in many municipalities access to social housing is restricted to those people proving their financial availability for renovating the apartments, thus excluding the poorest and most needy part of the population, including the homeless. This requirement has however a limited impact on the general quality of public houses, since the majority of them are occupied by those very poor tenants who could not afford to buy them during the 1990s or by their heirs. A national housing allowance is received by around 500,000 households, but its amount (10 Euros per month on average) is considered as totally inadequate to provide a meaningful support for people experiencing housing vulnerability. In any case, it is reserved to people already having a tenancy contract, thus excluding homeless people living on the streets or in shelters. Theoretically, the degree of tenancy protection in Hungary is rather weak, especially in the private market. However, the concrete possibility of getting rid of a tenant is reported as very limited. For this reason, many private landlords often avoid making official contracts or propose very short-term contracts (usually a one-year contract). This tendency is gradually extending to public rental market, with municipalities increasingly adopting the one-year contract to increase the possibility to evict problematic tenants. This circumstance undermines housing stability for social housing tenants, including beneficiaries of Housing First projects. Tenants can be evicted because of rent arrears or severe breaches of the contract. Particularly, contracts can be suspended after an arrear of three months, although the tenant has the opportunity to renegotiate the debt with the municipality until the very last moment. The degree to which evictions are actually executed presents high local variations, e.g. in the

district of Köbánya, where the selected Housing First project has been implemented, the local municipality has committed in reducing eviction as a political aim, while in many others tenants are more easily evicted. Reliable data on evictions are however not available.

In the recent years, a process of criminalisation of homelessness has been occurring in Hungary. In 2013, a national decree made it possible to charge and, eventually, arrest people sleeping in public spaces. Drawing on this decree, municipalities can charge people sleeping rough with a fine of 100 Euros, which can be transformed into detention after three charges. Despite the law is actually limitedly enforced, it institutionalises stigmatisation and criminalisation of homelessness. As for numbers, the last survey, conducted by various service providers through a one-off count made 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2014, reported 10,459 homeless people in the country, that is 0.1 per cent of total population. The count only includes people living rough (3,231 people) and people in shelters, hostels and other accommodation for homeless people (7,228 people), thus not including people living in insecure or inadequate housing. Most of them are male (79 per cent) and aged 30-49 or over 50. More than the half of the homeless are supposed to live in Budapest, that would be at least 5,000 people. Hungary does not have a national homelessness strategy; the mainstream intervention is strongly based on the staircase model, and it almost entirely consists in building night shelters and emergency accommodations. Homelessness services are regulated and financed at the national level, with the provision mainly handled at the municipal level with a broad scope for NGOs, which creates high territorial fragmentation. National funds usually cover 60 per cent of the shelters' expenses, with the managing organisation in charge of covering the remainder. Some municipalities support, at least partially, the organisations, but in some cases homeless people may be required to pay a fee to access to temporary shelters. Shelters are also reported to exclude part of the homeless population because of conditions for access, like respecting very strict rules and, in some cases, producing documents concerning one's health and social situation (e.g. a negative tuberculosis test result and a social security card). As a result, it is a widely shared opinion among Hungarian experts that the homelessness care system is inadequate in providing support to pathways out of homelessness. Housing First is very limited in Hungary, with just two small-sized experimental projects involving three districts of Budapest, for a total amount of 18 homeless people placed in 11 apartments.

### ***3.3.2 Genesis and description of the Housing First project in Budapest***

The case study of Budapest regards a Housing First project implemented in the district of Köbánya. Köbánya has a population of 80,978 inhabitants and a total housing stock of 38,432 apartments, 2,484 of which are owned by the local municipality (6.5 per cent of the stock), while the rest is privately owned. Like in the rest of the country, publicly owned dwellings lodge the poorest part of the population and are in a bad state. Around 100 municipal apartments are reported to be empty due to their excessively poor conditions. Long waiting lists are reported by municipal officials, although numbers are not available.

The story of Housing First Budapest is a particular one, where Housing First has been used to guide a resettlement of a specific homeless group living in slums within a forest into socially rented apartments. The genesis of the project dates back to spring 2012 with a protest against the Municipality's intention to evict a group of homeless people settled in the Terebesi Forest, a small forest located within the district. The organisation *A Város Mindenkie* (The City is For All, henceforth AVM) defended the interests of the homeless, by organising a round-the-clock vigil over the slums where homeless people were living and preventing the bulldozers from demolishing them. Parallel to this action, AVM started negotiating with the Municipality of Köbánya to find possible solutions. The negotiations went on for months, during which AVM started to propose Housing First as a possible solution for those homeless people. The international appeal of Housing First convinced the Municipality, which accepted to start an experimental project of Housing First targeted to the homeless people living in the forest. The Municipality committed to make available for the project at least two apartments per year. However, these apartments needed renovation, which was not part of the portfolio of AVM. The Hungarian branch of the international non-profit organisation Habitat for Humanity was therefore involved to manage housing renovation. This was an important step for accelerating negotiations, since Habitat for Humanity acted as a mediator in the conflict between AVM and the Municipality. At the end of this process, the project started its operations in April 2013.

As anticipated, the project is targeted to the homeless people settled in the specific context of the Terebesi Forest in the Köbánya district. Hence, the target group is identified by its location and not by the possession of specific requirements, like mental illness or substance abuse. Since social housing is available only for people proving residency in the district, access to the project was restricted to those homeless people able to prove a local

connection. The availability of a steady income is *de facto* a requirement for homeless people living in the forest to be enrolled in the programme, although the Municipality has been making any effort to accept unregistered jobs and unofficial income. The beneficiaries are indeed required to pay the rent, although a reduced social rent. Hitherto 8 people have been participating in the programme, with 4 available apartments. They all have a stable income, coming from job activities, pensions, disability benefits or other social benefits. Some of them are reported to suffer from mental illness, but the exact number is unknown. Hence, the target group of Housing First Budapest is not comparable with the one of Pathways Housing First, being identified by location and financial conditions.

AVM, the leading organisation of the project, is a grassroots movement whose members are people affected by homelessness and housing poverty and other activists working for the right to housing and social justice. It is based on voluntary work and is engaged in defending and promoting the right to housing through communication campaigns, events, training, and radical direct actions. The project is supported by the Hungarian branch of the international NGO Habitat for Humanity. The global mission of Habitat for Humanity is to eradicate housing poverty. The Hungarian branch, founded in 1996, has specialised in promoting interventions of housing renovation for low income households. In recent years the organisation explicitly enlarged its interest towards Roma and homeless people. The project draws on three sources of funding: Habitat for Humanity, which also provides volunteers for the renovation work; the private foundation *Van Esély Alapítvány*; and another foundation that prefers to remain anonymous. The financial sustainability of the programme on the long term is hindered by the lack of support coming from public institutions at higher levels: the Municipality of Budapest and the central state. In official documents and informal communications, the central government has explicitly stated that the national strategy to address homelessness is and will be based on the staircase model. European funds could be helpful to overcome national rigidities, but in the Hungarian National Strategic Reference Framework for the period 2014-2020 Housing First initiatives are to be eventually supported only in the convergence regions, which do not include Budapest, where the vast majority of homeless people live and where Housing First is being tested.

Housing is provided by the Municipality of Köbánya by drawing on the stock devoted to social housing. The beneficiaries of the project are applied the same terms and conditions as any other social housing tenant, provided that the programme takes in charge the renovation

costs. The tenants sign a direct contract of one year with the Municipality. The contract is renovated if the tenants fully respect the contract. As anticipated, tenants are required to pay a reduced social rent, which is around 65 Euros per month, included heating, that is less than the half of a low market rent. Electricity is provided through a pre-paid card system, by which the tenants purchase a certain amount of electricity, in order to prevent them from accumulating debts. Heating is provided by means of wood stoves, which is the cheapest heating system; wood is provided for free by the Municipality. Renovation is an important part of the programme, since public houses are provided in bad conditions. It is carried out by volunteers of Habitat for Humanity. This results in a certain burden for coordinating the volunteers and the timing of renovation, due to their limited availability; indeed, it permits decisive savings for the sustainability of the programme, since renovation costs would be an excessive burden both for AVM and the Municipality. Homeless people due to access the programme are also involved in the renovation work, as a form of empowerment and participation. This is in line with the philosophy of the leading organisation, AVM, which was founded and is led and managed (also) by homeless people. A major hindrance for the project is the lack of available social housing in the district, reflecting the situation in the whole country. The municipality only makes available two apartments per year, since its housing stock is already occupied usually by people with unlimited tenancy contracts, and it has to deal with a large waiting list.

All the players involved in the project are planning to create a new umbrella organisation, called *Utcából Lakásba Egyesület* (From the street to home), together with other organisations involved in a similar Housing First project running in other two districts of Budapest. This brand-new association is supposed to advocate for Housing First at the national level and promote contacts with international players implementing Housing First in other European countries.

### ***3.3.3 The housing in Housing First in Budapest: issues at stake***

#### *Housing availability and affordability*

A clear issue of availability of affordable apartments in the national and local housing markets emerges from the case study. Only 7 per cent of apartments are available for renting at the national level, and only 4 per cent is devoted to social housing, which is around 15,000 apartments. Most of them are occupied, sometimes with tenancy agreements for indefinite



terms. Long waiting lists are reported to access social housing, especially in Budapest. In the district of Kőbánya, the municipality owns 2,484 apartments, 100 of which stand empty because of poor quality.

Housing quality is a context-specific issue of the Hungarian social housing stock. Many apartments do not comply with minimum quality standards and renovation is too expensive. Following the privatisation of the 1990s, the municipalities remained with those apartments in the poorest conditions. Therefore renovation is a major issue in Hungary, since neither the municipalities nor the tenants have the financial resources to renovate the apartments. For this reason, in many municipalities access to social housing is restricted to those people proving their financial availability for renovating the apartments, thus excluding the poorest and most needy part of the population, including the homeless. Housing First is therefore an opportunity for the Municipality of Kőbánya to use part of the 100 empty apartments after a renovation provided for by volunteers of the NGO Habitat for Humanity. However, the process of identifying, renovating and assigning the apartments is rather slow and only few apartments can be devoted to Housing First, actually two per year.

The private rental market is not considered as a possible solution, due to its low availability (3 per cent of the national stock) and high costs, especially in Budapest.

#### *Competition and equality in access to housing*

A clear issue of equality in access to social housing emerges from the case study. Thanks to the mediation of Habitat for Humanity, some of the homeless people pertaining to the group living in the forest of Kőbánya get a municipal house in a context of high scarcity. Other poor households are excluded because of the lack of available social housing and the requirement for renovating the apartments that favours the not-so-poor candidates.

#### *Tenure security*

Structural issues of tenancy protection prevent the initiative from achieving the goal of housing stability, which is a major purpose of Housing First. Beneficiaries of the project are applied the one-year contract increasingly adopted by municipalities for all social contracts. After one year, the contract is renewed if the tenant proves to be able to continue paying the social rent and has not met with rent arrears or severe breaches of the contract. In a context of rental housing scarcity, evictions are often the only way to free ready-for-use apartments to be used for Housing First without having to handle with the renovation. This practice, whose

concrete realisation depends on local arrangements and political decisions, results in the highly paradoxical situation of creating homelessness to solve homelessness.

### **3.4 Housing First in London, UK<sup>25</sup>**

#### ***3.4.1 Housing and homelessness in London and UK***

The British welfare state has been traditionally generous as regards the protection of the right to housing for low income households. It has a rather large social housing sector, accounting for 18.2 per cent of the total housing stock, combined with an extensive system of housing allowances. The social stock was even larger (around 30 per cent) until the 1980s, when the Right to Buy scheme was introduced, allowing many social tenants to purchase the home they were living in at a discounted price. This opportunity was widely taken up, leading to a consistent reduction in the social stock (Orji and Sparkes, 2014). Home ownership accounts for 64 per cent of the housing stock, with the largest rental sector among the countries with a dual housing regime (36 per cent) (Pittini et al., 2015). It is generally targeted to low income households and provided by municipalities, housing associations and private companies. In England, housing associations have gradually become the most important providers of social housing, with 2.3 million dwellings against 1.7 million owned by local public authorities, which encountered a constant decline from the 4.8 million dwellings owned in 1980 (Orji and Sparkes, 2014). 3.1 per cent of the housing stock is made of empty houses, that is 710,000 homes, 259,000 of which are reported to be empty on a long-term basis (Orji and Sparkes, 2014). The vast majority of them is in the private rental sector. Generally speaking, there is an undersupply of housing in all sectors, but especially in the rental sector. Despite a policy preference for home ownership at least since the 1980s, a growing part of the population find it difficult to purchase a house, due to the sharp increase in the house prices and the economic hardship of the last decade of crisis. These circumstances create enormous pressure on the rental sector, with private rents driven up by market scarcity and a social stock which cannot meet the growing demand (Orji and Sparkes, 2014). This situation is exceptionally exacerbated in London. On average, social rents are the half of private rents, with average market rents at the highest in Europe, at least in absolute

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<sup>25</sup> The case study was conducted between October 2014 and February 2015. Where not otherwise specified, information derives from the research report drafted for the ImPROvE project (Cools and Oosterlynck, 2015).

terms. Housing allowances traditionally play a strong role in England, although the system has been made less generous since 2010. New criteria restricting the size of allowances for households living in socially rented housing have been introduced, and restrictions on access to housing allowances for job seeking migrants from the European Economic Area have been introduced too. Tenancy protection is rather weak in the UK. Since the 1990s, there has been a shift away from life-long security towards fixed-term security. In the private market, the duration of the contract is not regulated, ranging from one month to the infinite, although a one year contract is the most common solution. In the social market, the duration of the contract is formally unlimited, although a probation period of one or two years is gradually becoming common. Furthermore, there is possibility for early termination of the contract, in case of rent arrears, breaches of the contract, domestic violence or antisocial behaviour in both the private and social markets. The possibility of terminating a contract because of antisocial behaviour has gradually been made easier, also in the social sector. There is no period of grace; this means that the landlord can start the procedure for dismissal of the tenancy immediately after an arrear is recorded. The protection period, during which the notice of the eviction is not effective, ranges from two weeks to two months. Social tenants enjoy a higher degree of tenancy protection, since the landlord cannot simply terminating the tenancy by notice, but must provide a court order for repossession. Although an exact number of evictions resulting in homelessness is not available, evictions and short hold tenancies are considered as important causes of homelessness in the UK (Wilson, 2014).

Available data on homelessness refer to England, not the whole UK. 53,410 people (0.1 per cent of the population) are reported to be homeless in England by official data including people formally accepted as homeless by public authorities according to the law. This is a measure of the so-called “statutory homelessness”, which includes “those households for whom local authorities, after receiving an application, have a duty to secure accommodation because they are unintentionally homeless and in a priority need category” (Wilson, 2014, p. 1 quoted in Cools and Oosterlynck, 2015b). In most cases, housing is secured as temporary accommodation, thus not solving homeless people’s housing problems. The most important priority group is adults with dependent children, followed by disabled people, young people under 16, and victims of domestic violence. The category of the statutory homelessness was introduced in the 1977 Housing Act, further developed in the 1996 Housing Act and the 2002 Homelessness Act. 53,410 is therefore the total number of homeless acceptances by local authorities under the auspices of the Housing Act. People not accepted as homeless by local

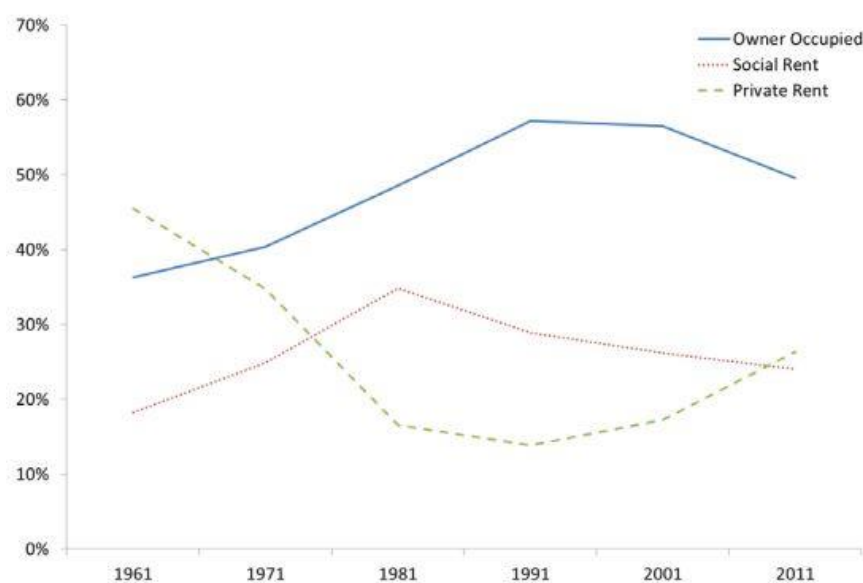
authorities, or that do not apply for help to local authorities, are not included in this count and constitute the so-called non-statutory homelessness, which is mainly constituted by single homeless people not pertaining to priority groups. According to the esteem of Fitzpatrick et al. (2016), the number of homeless people would rise to 191,400 people when including also non-statutory homelessness, which is mainly constituted by single homeless people not pertaining to priority groups. Both statutory and non-statutory homelessness have sharply increased in the last five years. This growth is mainly attributable to the sharp increase of people becoming homeless because of loss of a private tenancy, rising from 11 to 29 per cent as a proportion of all statutory acceptances from 2010 to 2015. Acceptances have increased of 85 per cent in London from 2010 to 2015, with 39 per cent of them being attributable to loss of private tenancy (Fitzpatrick et al., 2016). This dual system creates two categories of homeless people: statutory homeless are perceived as being homeless because of external reasons, and receive a housing solution, albeit often temporary; non-statutory homeless are instead perceived as being “intentionally” homeless and the Housing Act only prescribes for them that they should receive general advice and assistance to access the housing market.

In England, homelessness is handled both by the social and the housing policy sectors, and the housing-led approach coexists with a staircase approach in driving homelessness policies. The linear staircase approach is predominant, but a well-established system of supported housing is available, by providing around 31,000 beds, against the 8,500 provided in emergency shelters. By supported housing in the UK we mean communal and congregate accommodation with on-site social support. Since families usually access to housing provided by local authorities under the auspices of the Housing Act, single homeless persons are the vast majority of the users of emergency accommodation and supported housing. Homelessness services are regulated and financed both at the national and the municipal level, while their provision is organised at the local level and is mainly delivered by NGOs. The 2003 Supporting People programme has been a main driver of decentralisation of services to homeless people, with more power and responsibilities assigned to local authorities. Local commissioning bodies, including local authorities and service providers, were introduced with the aim of identifying local needs, which are then administered by local authorities and delivered by private providers, like NGOs and voluntary organisations. A result of this decentralisation is that prove of local connection is increasingly reported as a barrier to access to homelessness service. Considering the institutional context, England would appear as a favourable context for the implementation and diffusion of Housing First: it has an updated

national strategy, the housing-led approach already informs homelessness services, there is an integration between social and housing policy in addressing homelessness, a wide range of highly specialised services are available to homeless people. Indeed, Housing First is established at the local level, with some initiatives implemented in different cities, but a supra-local coordination is not established. A research by Bretherton and Pleace (2015) on nine Housing First project in nine English cities have produced promising outcomes, in terms of housing retention, improvement of physical and mental health conditions, reduction in drugs and alcohol use, and social integration, strongly calling for a more robust adoption of the Housing First approach across the country.

Within this national framework, London represents a particular case in terms of both the housing market and the homeless population. The structure of the housing market in London is described in its evolution in figure 3.1.

**Figure 3.1.** Housing tenure in London, 1961 – 2011.



*Source: Greater London Authority, 2013*

After decades of growth, home ownership has decreased in the last twenty years, accounting for 49.5 per cent of the housing stock, with the private rented sector substantially increasing to reach 26.4 per cent of the stock, and the social sector decreasing to 24.1 per cent. The housing market in London is characterised by high and rising housing prices, to the point that terms like “housing crisis” or “housing bubble” are increasingly used to describe the

housing situation in London. According to the National Federation of Housing Associations<sup>26</sup>, the average house price in London (526,085 £) is two times the national average price (265,888 £) and 16 times the mean annual income. In Camden, where the Housing First project is located, it is 973,505 £, 24.7 times the mean income. Home ownership is therefore out of reach for many households. The situation is similar in the private rental sector, with an average monthly rent of 1,461 £ in London (1,867 £ in Camden), against a national average of 720 £. As a result of this awkward situation 33.7 per cent of working households claim a housing allowance, against a percentage of 23.8 per cent at the national level. 380,301 Londoners were reported to be on social housing waiting lists in 2013, a 56 per cent more than ten years before (Pleace and Bretherton, 2013).

This situation, together with the tendency of homeless people to concentrate in larger cities, makes homelessness a particularly relevant problem in London. 6,508 people were reported to sleep rough at least one night in London in 2013/2014 by the CHAIN database<sup>27</sup>, with a sharp increase in the last years: rough sleepers were 3,975 in 2010/2011. 87 per cent of them are male, 46 per cent have British nationality, while 30.8 per cent are from Eastern European countries that joined the EU after 2004. This group is particularly vulnerable since, like extra EU migrants, has no access neither to statutory homelessness nor to supported housing. In order to address the increasingly troubled issue of homelessness, the city of London provides 13.60 beds per 10,000 inhabitants, against a national figure of 7.46 bed. London has also developed specific programmes targeted to rough sleepers, like the No Second Night Out programme, which aims at providing a rapid response in terms of accommodation for rough sleepers based on fast assessments. The need to prove local connection to access to services is a major problem in London, where many homeless people move from outside and from abroad. London is divided into 33 districts, each one with its own local council; more than the half of them is reported as not accepting clients with no local connection.

Camden is a central London district with a population of 220,000 inhabitants. It contains extremes of both wealth and poverty and is ethnically and culturally highly diverse. It is the second London borough per number of rough sleepers: 501 people have been reported to sleep rough in 2013/2014 by the CHAIN database. This number is constantly growing since

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<sup>26</sup> <http://www.housing.org.uk/resource-library/browse/home-truths-2015-2016-the-housing-market-in-london/>

<sup>27</sup> CHAIN is a system of data collection on rough sleeping commissioned by the Mayor of London and managed by the NGO St. Mungo's Broadway, accessible at <http://www.mungos.org/chain>.

2010/2011, when 291 rough sleepers were counted in the district. 57 per cent of rough sleepers in Camden have a British nationality, 35 per cent come from other European countries (mainly from Central and Eastern Europe, especially Poland, Romania and Lithuania), while 10 per cent come from extra European countries. 49 per cent of them are reported to suffer from alcohol abuse, 38 per cent from drug abuse, 45 per cent from mental health. 27 per cent are reported to suffer from mental health and alcohol and/or drug abuse.

### ***3.4.2 Genesis and description of the Housing First project in London***

Camden Housing First started up as a two-year pilot project managed by the NGO Single Homeless Project in February 2012. A social experimentation called the Camden Hostel Pathway was implemented in the borough since 2007. The system offered beds and social support in different collective and independent accommodations in the district, but it was not working well, at least for certain individuals. For this reason, the Camden Borough was searching for innovative solutions, and Single Homeless Project proposed the piloting of a Housing First project. The project was commissioned and funded with an annual budget of 90,000 £ by the Camden Borough. At the end of the pilot project the Camden Borough organised a tender to continue the service, according to the rules for public procurement. The organisation St. Mungo's Broadway won the tender and took over the service from Single Homeless Project in summer 2014 for three years.

The target group consisted of non-statutory single homeless people with mental illness and/or substance abuse, who had been living, continuously or repeatedly, in the Camden Hostel Pathway for at least three years. The main goal of the project was indeed to find effective housing solutions and improve the social and health conditions of those clients for whom the system was not delivering effective results. 10 clients were selected in the pilot project, which grew to 20 in the second edition of the project, 14 men and 6 women, ranging from 33 to 66 years old. Several of the selected beneficiaries had exhibited anti-social behaviour before entering the project, and a marked reduction of anti-social behaviour has been reported after they accessed a house. Access to the project occurs through referrals by service providers involved in the Camden Hostel Pathway system, which are assessed by the team of Camden Housing First. Candidates are engaged through a strategy combining elements from the Housing First approach and procedures from the Camden Hostel Pathway system. Some of the assessment criteria used in this early stage are a sort of evaluation on the

housing readiness of the candidates. For instance, candidates with a debt of over 50 £ in the payment of rents to the hostel or to other accommodations are not accepted in the project. Furthermore, they need to be able to open a bank account and to be entitled to receive social benefits, especially the housing benefit, the unemployment benefit or the incapacity benefit, for people not in the condition to work because of medical reasons. In order to get a source of income, candidates are often put under the Job Seeker Allowance; however, it is in most cases unrealistic that they meet Job Seeker Allowance's criteria in the long term, thus threatening their permanence in the Housing First programme. Recent policy changes made it difficult for migrants to get access to housing benefits. Since January 2014 migrant jobseekers from the European Economic Area (EEA) can no longer get housing benefits if they are on Job Seeker Allowance. Migrants who already lived in the UK and receive both benefits lose their housing benefits if they move to another district. This circumstance excludes *de facto* most EEA migrants from Camden Housing First project, since beneficiaries are moved to other districts and this would entail the loss of entitlement to housing benefits. Once candidates are accepted, the staff does a needs assessment, that is then repeated every three months to monitor the experience of each person. Based on the needs assessment, an action plan is prepared, including the personalised health and social support to be provided in agreement with the beneficiary. During this preparation period, a bank account is set up and all the administrative tasks to grant the social benefits the beneficiaries are entitled to are managed. At this point the team looks for a suitable apartment; in the second edition of the project, this task is carried out by the social enterprise Real Lettings. This phase takes from two to four months because of the difficulties in finding apartments. During this period the social support team starts its activities, which are then carried out also once the beneficiary enters the apartment.

Housing is provided in the private rental market. This is the result of a precise choice of Camden Borough, which did not want to make social houses available for a non-priority group in a context of scarcity of social housing also for priority groups. Clients are accommodated in scattered-site single apartments outside Camden, to offer them the possibility to detach themselves from the environment where they lived as homeless for many years. This also results in displacement of clients from a familiar environment from which they derive social support. Indeed, it is also very difficult to find affordable apartments for this kind of initiatives in Camden, because of the high prices in the local housing market. The preferences of the beneficiaries are taken into account as far as possible, and viewings of different apartments are organised in order to choose the most suitable. Most of the



beneficiaries would prefer to settle in Camden, or in the bordering neighbourhoods of Westminster and Islington, but this request cannot be met because of lack of affordable houses in the three districts. Most of them end up in being housed in North of London, where affordable houses are available and mobility services are better than in South London, although some beneficiaries have been settled in South London following their preference. Contracts are signed directly between the clients and the landlords, without the mediation of the programme. The procurement of apartments for the users of Camden Housing First has been a major challenge for the project. Indeed, the main reason for engaging St. Mungo's Broadway for the management of the second edition of the project was that they presented a project in collaboration with the social enterprise Real Lettings, which is specialised in attaining properties for homeless and marginalised people. This was supposed to facilitate the relationships with the landlords, but it is not happening, because of six reasons. First, several landlords ask for rent in advance and/or other deposits, which exceed the capacity of the beneficiaries. Second, it is very difficult to find one bedroom apartments for people on housing benefit; two bedroom apartments are much more common because they are more profitable for landlords. Third, landlords are often reluctant to rent to ex homeless people who are supposed to cause troubles. Fourth, most tenancies come with a six months contract, which is inadequate to foster housing stability. Fifth, some beneficiaries refuse the proposed apartments because they are smaller than their previous hostel rooms. Sixth, given the high demand for affordable one bedroom accommodations, viewings are planned with one day notice and this quest for responsiveness is not suitable for many beneficiaries, who cannot be contacted or do not show up at the viewings.

Social support is provided by mobile specialist support workers through ICM, Intensive Case Management. In the second edition of the project the team is composed of one coordinator, three support workers and one peer worker, a volunteer who experienced homelessness herself. As established by the Housing First guidelines, social support is provided separately from housing, it follows a harm reduction approach, and it continues also when the beneficiaries are not housed. For instance, during the phase of searching for apartments, which may last until four months, people are supported where they live, usually in hostels, but also in case of events like incarcerations. Differently from what is prescribed by the Housing First principles, social support is not conceived as being open-ended. The goal is to support people for one or two years, and then try to gradually decrease the intensity of

support and eventually stop it. This strategy is implemented in order to be able to take on new users and derives from pressures rising in the context of decreasing local budgets.

### ***3.4.3 The housing in Housing First in London: issues at stake***

#### *Housing availability and affordability*

A clear issue of availability of affordable apartments in the national and, especially, local housing market emerges from the case study. For structural reasons dealt with in the next section on equality, social houses are not available for Housing First tenants. Housing is therefore provided in the private rental market. The local housing market in the district of Camden is however characterised by a structural lack of affordable housing, due to the very high housing prices and rents. This pushes Housing First tenants towards the outer districts of North London, where they cannot enjoy the same level of social integration they would enjoy in Camden, where they have more or less continuously lived for at least three years. In any case, finding available apartments is a major issue also outside Camden. Housing First tenants need a one-bedroom apartment, which is rather difficult to find in the London housing market, where two-bedrooms apartments prevail. Furthermore, private landlords are reluctant to rent their apartments to Housing First users, and often ask for rent in advance or other deposits which are unaffordable for people living on housing and unemployment or incapacity benefits. For these very reasons, the second edition of the project has been assigned to St. Mungo's Broadway, which could count on the collaboration of a social enterprise specialised in attaining properties for homeless and marginalised people. This was however not enough, and structural problems in finding affordable house have continued also in the second edition. The private rental market is clearly a non-optimal solution for Camden Housing First. A socially rented house would offer lower rents, better accommodations, and greater tenure security.

#### *Competition and equality of access to housing*

The Camden Borough, commissioner of the project, decided not to make social houses available for Housing First users. Due to allocation rules of social housing in England, homeless people are entitled to access a social house only if they are formally accepted as homeless by Local Authorities under the auspices of the Housing Act. This includes priority groups like adults with dependent children, disabled people, young people under 16, victims of domestic violence. Housing First beneficiaries are the so-called non-statutory homeless,

not pertaining to priority groups. The Camden Borough does not want to interfere with these allocation rules by granting access to social housing to non-statutory homeless people in a context of scarcity of social housing also for priority groups and the general public.

In a sense, Camden Housing First challenges the English dual system of homelessness, which excludes *de facto* non-statutory homeless from access to housing. Housing First beneficiaries are indeed granted access to private but affordable houses, although they are not recognised as officially homeless. There is more: they should be granted stable housing, while statutory homeless often receive only a temporary accommodation. This is however not the reality, as discussed in the next section on tenure security. In any case, only homeless people entitled to receive housing benefits and unemployment or incapacity benefits can access the programme. This excludes people not receiving any benefit and it categorically excludes migrants from the European Economic Area, which cannot get both housing and unemployment benefits. Furthermore, the project only accepts people who had been living, continuously or repeatedly, in the Camden Hostel Pathway for at least three years, thus re-excluding people already excluded from the existing system, and reproducing barriers of access to social housing related to local connection. Finally, candidates with a debt of over 50 £ in the payment of rents to the hostel or to other accommodations are not accepted in the project, thus, again, reproducing an already existing barrier to access social housing.

### *Tenure security*

Structural issues of tenancy protection prevent the initiative from achieving the goal of housing stability, which is a major purpose of Housing First. Beneficiaries of the project actually hold the tenancy, by signing a direct contract with the landlords. However, most tenancies come with a six months or one year contract, which is definitely inadequate to foster housing stability. Every six months or one year the landlord can decide to get rid of the tenant, although obviously the tenancy may be extended, and this is usually the case. A threat to tenure security also in the case of unlimited contracts is anti-social behaviour by the tenant. In this case, the landlord may indeed get rid of the tenant quite easily. Several Camden Housing First beneficiaries were charged with anti-social behaviour during their life as homeless; a marked reduction of this kind of behaviours has been reported after they accessed an independent house with social support. This circumstance may be considered as an outcome of the project in the sense of preventing homeless people from exhibiting behaviours that could lead them to be evicted, thus reinforcing tenure security.

Housing First tenants would enjoy a greater tenure security in socially rented housing. There an unlimited contract, at least after a probation period, is much more common, and landlords must obtain a favourable court decision before evicting tenants. However, due to the aforementioned structural reasons, social houses are not available for Camden Housing First beneficiaries.

### **3.5 Housing First in Stockholm, Sweden<sup>28</sup>**

#### ***3.5.1 Housing and homelessness in Stockholm and Sweden***

The Swedish housing policy is not aimed at providing individual support to low-income households but at supporting all households as market actors, through universal public housing provision and protection of the weak position of the tenants in the free housing market. Three major tenure forms are available in the housing market: home ownership, tenant-ownership and rental (public and private). Home ownership accounts for 42 per cent of the market and generally refers to detached single-family housing where owners enjoy full real estate rights. Tenant-ownership accounts for 23 per cent of the market, and it means being member of a housing cooperative. Housing cooperatives are owners of the physical buildings (generally multi-family apartments), while members just buy the right to live within those walls. Rented dwellings account for 35 per cent of the market, equally divided between private and public rental, and are associated with multi-family housing. The structure of the housing market has significantly changed during the last decades. Home ownership increased from 34 per cent in 1970 to 42 per cent in 2012. If tenant-ownership is included, it jumped from 47 per cent up to 65 per cent. At the same time the rental sector decreased from 53 per cent in 1970 to 35 per cent in 2012. This new configuration is the result of the rupture with the principle of tenure neutrality (between rent and ownership), which has been a cornerstone of Swedish housing policy until the 1990s, when a combination of policies have been introduced to favour home-ownership. Subsidies to new constructions and housing allowances for mid-low income households were two pillars of the national housing policy before the 1990s. The former were constantly reduced and finally completely phased out while the latter were remarkably cut: total expenditure in housing allowances declined of

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<sup>28</sup> The case study was conducted between February and April 2014. Where not otherwise specified, information derives from the research report drafted for the ImPROvE project (Colombo, Saruis and Kazepov, 2016).

about 40 per cent between 1995 and 1998 and a further 36 per cent between 1999 and 2008, while the number of households entitled to receive allowances fell for about 70 per cent between 1995 and 2009 (Christophers, 2013). As a consequence, housing affordability for mid-low income households has worsened: the share of income spent on housing increased from 17 per cent to 33 per cent during the 1990s (Turner and Whitehead, 2002). Another result is a growing segmentation of the housing market: tenure type increasingly correlates with income. The lower the income, the higher the probability of being a tenant and not a home owner (Holmqvist and Magnusson Turner, 2013). These processes particularly affect urban areas. The prime example is Stockholm, where the proportion of residents living in public rental housing fell from 32 per cent in 1990 to 18 per cent in 2010 (Andersson and Magnusson Turner, 2014). The total rental stock (public and private) in Stockholm inner city has been reduced in the same period from 60 per cent to 36 per cent, while the proportion of tenant-ownership has gone up from 17 per cent to 38 per cent (Länsstyrelsen Stockholm, 2013). A proper social housing sector does not exist, since public housing is addressed to every household, regardless of its income, except for a small quote of houses reserved to people in specific social programs. It is provided by the municipal housing companies that now have to act as market actors, after a long history of acting off the market, with the aim to promote housing as a universal social right (Elsinga and Lind, 2012). As a consequence, between 2000 and 2010, 120,920 dwellings were sold by public housing companies in Sweden, whereof 41,990 in Stockholm (Andersson and Magnusson Turner, 2014). Since the available stock is decreasing and the marketable part of the stock is usually the most attractive one, the municipalities hold the most unattractive buildings and the risk of segregation of socially and economically marginalised households is higher (Turner and Whitehead, 2002). Each municipality owns a housing company, except for the City of Stockholm, which owns four companies. The municipal Housing Office collects applications for public housing and manages the waiting list, allocating dwellings according to a ranking that considers length of time in the queue, the applicant's preferences for apartment location and size, the maximum amount of rent they are willing to pay, or other priority needs (single parent households, immigrant households, young people, evicted households, etc.) based on the assessment of local specificities. Given that the housing stock is managed at the local level, housing availability varies consistently among different regions and cities and the issue is particularly relevant in the metropolitan areas (namely Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö), where housing shortage is a growing problem, especially in the rental sector (where 75 per cent of the Swedish municipalities reports a shortage of apartments). A limited but growing part of

the public stock (as an example, the 0.5 per cent in Stockholm) is reserved to households that cannot arrange housing by their own, neither with housing allowances. It is the so-called “secondary housing market”, and consists of apartments and rooms sub-leased on special terms, without tenure security. The secondary market was originally developed for the clients of the social services (people with mental illness, social problems, alcohol and/or drug addiction etc.) but, due to housing shortage, it has become an ordinary accommodation also for other socioeconomically weak categories, such as young people and immigrants. The secondary market includes 16,386 houses, many of which in Stockholm (Sahlin, 2015), and has developed in recent years as a consequence of the new structural conditions, namely the length of the waiting lists, and the high requirements for accessing regular market. Because of the selling of public stock and the general housing shortage, waiting lists for accessing a public dwelling are increasingly longer, especially in the bigger cities. The prime example is Stockholm city, where 551,756 people are registered in the municipal waiting list<sup>29</sup>: they were 400,000 in 2012 and 80,000 in 2002. 64,618 people added to the waiting list in 2015, the biggest number ever recorder in one single year: they were 18,706 ten years before, in 2005<sup>30</sup>. As a result, the average queuing time is increasing year by year: it was 8.2 years in 2015, 7.7 in 2014<sup>31</sup>, while the vast majority of registered candidates received a house within 6 years in 2007<sup>32</sup>. The average queuing time can be of up to 16 years in the inner city<sup>33</sup>. The consequence is that many people, especially young people, are forced to live in sublet apartments found in the secondary housing market or in the black market. Furthermore, the requirements for accessing the regular rental market are becoming more and more demanding. These include proving the absence of previous debts and the possibility to pay three times the requested rent. Because of these barriers mid-low income households are increasingly excluded by the regular market and are often forced to live their entire lives in the secondary market, especially in the bigger cities and in Stockholm more than elsewhere. Rents in the regular market are regulated through a complicated system aiming at building a unitary market where public and private landlords compete on the same market. Public rents are determined through collective bargaining between the National Union of Tenants and the landlords organisations. Once public rents have been determined, they influence private rents, in a sense that the latter cannot exceed public rents more than a certain margin. As a result,

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<sup>29</sup> <https://bostad.stockholm.se/statistik/statistik/tjansten/>. Last consultation 5<sup>th</sup> October 2016.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> <https://bostad.stockholm.se/statistik/summering-av-aret-2015/>

<sup>32</sup> <https://bostad.stockholm.se/statistik/statistik/tjansten/>

<sup>33</sup> <https://bostad.stockholm.se/statistik/summering-av-aret-2015/>

average public and private rent levels are very similar, 88 and 92 €/m<sup>2</sup> per year. This rent-setting system is proving to be successful for controlling private rents, but not for preventing general rent levels from substantial increases, again especially in bigger cities. Tenure security is rather strong, at least in the regular rental housing market. Contracts are fixed-term, but can last up to 25 years. Rent arrears and severe breaches of the contract are the two conditions that can lead to tenancy dismissal and eventually eviction. The share of the population suffering from rent arrears is low, compared to other European countries, 1.7 per cent and 7.3 among the population below the poverty line. In 2015, 6,684 evictions have been ordered and 2,224 executed in the country. On the contrary, tenants in the secondary market are in a very weak position: the landlord can easily get rid of them without any need for notice and the rents are not controlled as is the case in the regular market.

Homelessness in Sweden regards 30,800 people, according to the official survey of the National Board of Health and Welfare (NBHW, 2011). Men (64 per cent) and Swedish nationals (66 per cent) prevail. The definition of homelessness used in the survey is rather broad and includes four categories:

- Acute homelessness, including people living rough or in night shelters or other emergency accommodations (4,500 people).
- Institutional care and category housing, including people living in institutions who do not have any accommodation arranged in case of discharge (5,600 people).
- Long-term housing solutions, including people living in dwellings sub-leased by the social services, in the secondary housing market (13,900 people).
- Short-term insecure housing solutions, including people temporarily living with relatives or friends, or in temporary sublet solutions in the private market (6,800 people).

The survey is based on a preliminary map of public and private organisations in contact with homeless people in every municipality, which were then asked to fill in a standardised questionnaire providing information on their users. The Municipality of Stockholm uses a slightly stricter definition: a homeless person is someone who lacks his or her own or leased property, and relies on temporary accommodation or has no accommodation at all. People living in institutions or shelters who do not have any accommodation arranged in case of discharge and people temporarily living with friends, colleagues or acquaintances for a maximum period of three months are included in this definition (Stockholms Stad, 2014). Compared to the national definition, Stockholm City's does not include people with long-term

but unsafe or inadequate housing. According to these parameters, the situation in Stockholm is described in Table 3.3.

**Table 3.3.** Number and percentage of homeless people in Stockholm by gender 2004-2012.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Proportion (%)</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Proportion (%)</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Proportion (%)</b>
2012	2.059	72	783	27	<b>2.866</b>	100
2010	2.215	74	767	26	<b>2.982</b>	100
2008	2.272	74	809	26	<b>3.081</b>	100
2006	2.326	72	905	28	<b>3.231</b>	100
2004	2.458	73	898	27	<b>3.363</b>	100

*Source: Stockholms Stad, 2012*

The last count was made in the night between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> April 2012, and the majority of the homeless people was found in supported or nursing accommodation (34 per cent), training apartments (16 per cent), shelter or emergency accommodation (13 per cent), hosted by friends or relatives (11 per cent). 109 people (4 per cent) were reported sleeping outdoors, and 1,372 people are considered as in acute homelessness. The majority of homeless people in Stockholm (49 per cent) is aged 46-64 and women are usually younger than men (23 per cent of women belong to the range 20-29 compared with 12 per cent of men). 58 per cent of them are reported to have substance abuse problems (38 per cent mainly alcohol-related, 39 per cent mainly drug-related, 19 per cent both). 30 per cent of them are reported to be in contact with psychiatry, but the perception of the social workers of the local districts and of the municipal unit for homelessness is that 58 per cent of them show some kind of mental disease (Källmen et al., 2013). The homelessness national strategy has been adopted for the period 2007-2009 and has then not been updated. Services are planned and regulated at the national level, and are mainly financed and delivered at the municipal level. Stockholm issued its own homelessness strategy for 2014-2019. Its main goals are the development of eviction prevention services, the increase in the offer of permanent housing solutions, and the improvement of the employment situation of homeless people. The case management of homeless people in Stockholm occurs both at the district administration level and at the municipal level through the unit for homelessness. The traditional model of intervention on homelessness in Sweden is based on the staircase model. Even within the staircase perspective a housing-led approach has already been adopted in Stockholm: similarly to the Housing First intervention, some of the homeless people are provided with an individual accommodation, the so-called “Training Apartment”, but differently the



permanence of residency in the apartment depends on special terms with which they must comply, i.e. abstinence from alcohol and/or drugs, acceptance of a treatment and so on (Knutagård and Kristiansen, 2013). A national network aimed at defining and implementing a Swedish model of Housing First has been promoted by the University of Lund in 2009. The network also supports municipalities willing to test pilot projects; however, only eight municipalities have hitherto implemented Housing First projects.

### ***3.5.2 Genesis and description of the Housing First project in Stockholm***

*Bostad Först i Stockholms Stad*, “Housing First in Stockholm”, is a pilot project aimed at developing a local model of Housing First to support homeless people. It started in February 2010, and the first trial period ended in February 2014. A second edition of the project for 2014-2016, called *Bostad Först i Stockholms Stad 2.0*, was starting up at the time of the fieldwork. The spread and growth of Housing First in Sweden was promoted by the University of Lund in 2009. The initial milestone was the national conference on Housing First promoted by the University on the 6<sup>th</sup> November, 2009. The Department of Social Work at the University of Lund also offered support to the municipalities interested in setting up Housing First services in terms of: networking with other projects, mutual learning, creation of indicators and evaluation criteria. Two municipalities, Stockholm and Helsingborg, immediately decided to start up a Housing First project in 2010, followed by Malmö and Karlstad in 2012. Other four municipalities set up a project in the following years. The decisive input that made Stockholm the first municipality to accept the challenge launched by the University of Lund, came from the City Council, which asked the municipal Social Affairs Division to design and start a trial project. The project is entirely funded by the City of Stockholm, using the ordinary budget of the social services for homelessness.

As established by the Pathways to Housing model, the target group is chronically homeless people with mental illness and substance addiction. Indeed, the diagnosis of mental illness is often informally carried out by the social workers working in the project. This occurs because it is very difficult for potential Housing First beneficiaries to get a formal diagnosis by the healthcare service. The healthcare, organised at the provincial level, requires people to be very precise in attending appointments with the doctors and following their indications; this approach does not fit with the attitude of many chronically homeless people, who have many difficulties in attending appointments and accessing to institutionalised

services. The beneficiaries are selected among those homeless people stuck into staircase-based services since years. Access to the project is mainly regulated by the social workers of the local districts. Four local districts among the most disadvantaged ones in Stockholm (Spånga-Tensta, Hässelby-Vällingby, Skarpnäck and Skärholmen) have been selected for piloting Housing First in Stockholm. Social workers of the districts select people through motivational interviews to identify the potentialities and limits of the candidates. 35 beneficiaries have been involved in the project in the period 2010-2014.

The beneficiaries are provided with scattered-site independent housing procured in the public stock by the municipal housing company Svenska Bostäder, the only municipal company (on four), which answered the appeal of the municipality for making apartments available for the project. Svenska Bostäder uses the social stock they made available to the social services of the Municipality. In Stockholm around 400 apartments are reserved for this purpose (140 by Svenska Bostäder), of which 24 are allocated to the project. Table 3.4 shows the proportion between the housing stock reserved for Housing First and other significant stocks.

**Table 3.4.** HFS housing stock in proportion to other significant stocks.

<i>Stockholm housing stock</i>		<b>452,563</b>	
Municipal housing stock	78,252	% of total stock	17.3%
Svenska Bostäder housing stock	25,425	% of municipal stock	32.5%
Stock reserved for social purposes	400	% of total stock	0.1%
		% of municipal stock	0.5%
SB stock reserved for social purposes	140	% of total social stock	35.0%
Stock reserved for Housing First	24	% of total city stock	0.005%
		% of municipal stock	0.03%
		% of SB stock	0.1%
		% of stock reserved for social purposes	6.0%
		% of SB stock reserved for social purposes	17.1%

*Source: Author's elaboration*

For the first trial period the contract is signed between Svenska Bostäder and the social services of the local district, which then sublets the apartments to the clients. The trial period

may last between 9 to 24 months. The University of Lund had a pure Housing First intervention in mind, in which no trial period was foreseen. Stockholm Municipality (and other Swedish municipalities) contested this approach, knowing that no housing company would have supplied apartments for ex-homeless tenants without the inclusion of a trial period. After the trial period, if there are no problems or complaints, the contract is transferred directly to the client. In that case, Svenska Bostäder sets two new conditions: the tenants should be able to handle their financial affairs and should not have previous debts with the housing company. In the latter instance, Svenska Bostäder does not require the whole repayment, but the willingness to pay off the debt at least on a symbolic basis. Paying the rent regularly and respecting the Tenant Act are the only two conditions placed on clients in maintaining the apartment, just like any other tenant in Sweden. The most problematic part of the Tenant Act to be respected by Housing First tenants regards the prohibition of creating disturbances to the neighbours. Friends of the Housing First tenants often live on the streets and try to profit from the new situation, thus creating mess and disturbances in the whole neighbourhood. Contracts are interrupted when Svenska Bostäder receives complaints by the neighbours about disturbances created by the client. The situation is evaluated accordingly and a decision is taken by Svenska Bostäder, although the opinion of the municipality and of Stadsmission, the NGO in charge of social support, is also considered. The power of Svenska Bostäder is quite strong: since it is the only municipal housing company that agreed to participate in the project, the municipality handles it with care and avoids opposing its decisions. In some cases a halfway solution can be found and the tenant may be suspended only for a limited time and asked to spend a period (two weeks or one month) in a shelter managed by Stadsmission, considering it as a short treatment period. Tenants are required to pay 30 per cent of their income for rent. The rest is paid for by the local districts using the same funds earmarked for accommodating homeless people in shelters or training apartments. Table 3.5 shows the housing situation of the 35 beneficiaries at the end of the pilot project.

**Table 3.5.** Number and situation of HFS beneficiaries 2010-2014.

<b>Situation</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Share</b>
Sublet contract	16	45.7%
Waiting for a direct contract	3	8.6%
Direct contract	6	17.1%
Interrupted contract	7	20.0%
Died	3	8.6%
<i>Total</i>	<i>35</i>	<i>100,00%</i>

*Source: Author's elaboration from interviews and document analysis*

25 people on 35 (71.4 per cent) are still housed after the end of the project. 6 of them (17.1 per cent) have already signed a direct contract with the landlord. The number grows to nine (25.7 per cent) if we also consider the three people having finished their trial period and under evaluation for accessing a direct contract. Ten people have exited the project. Three have died, the other seven had their contract interrupted because of severe disturbances created to the neighbours, mainly by their friends. The apartments are scattered-site independent housing as in the original approach, although they are mainly concentrated in some areas of the suburbs (northern and southern areas of Stockholm) because of two reasons. Firstly, in those areas rents are relatively inexpensive and Svenska Bostäder does not reserve valuable apartments; secondly, the apartments must meet some characteristics regarding the size and the number of rooms, which are mainly met in these areas. 24 apartments have been reserved for Housing First in the pilot project. 40 more apartments have been introduced in the second editions, so that 64 apartments are now available for the project.

The social support is provided by the NGO Stadsmission, and is based on the approach of the intensive case management. The case manager visits the beneficiaries periodically (usually once a week) and coordinates staff available on call 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. As implied by the Pathways to Housing model, social support is entirely separated from housing. The case managers do not propose social plans or projects, but monitor the experience with the goal of maintaining housing stability. In this sense, an important part of their support is focused on the skills and behaviours needed to meet the requirements of the Tenant Act, so as not to run into complaints for improper actions, neglect of the apartment and of the relationship with the neighbourhood, in terms of people and spaces. The social support can go beyond this basic task only if it is requested by the tenant, e.g. in relation to mental health issues or drug and/or alcohol-related problems.

### ***3.5.3 The housing in Housing First in Stockholm: issues at stake***

#### *Housing availability and affordability*

At a first sight, the structure of the Swedish housing market and the orientation of the housing policy would appear as favourable to the successful implementation of Housing First. The large, albeit reduced, availability of rented houses, half of which rented by public providers, should ensure the availability of apartments to be assigned to Housing First tenants. However, the evolution of the Swedish housing system in the last three decades caused a severe housing shortage, especially in Stockholm, and the circumstance is putting severe hindrances to the development of Housing First. Due to housing shortage and high demand, both private landlords and municipal housing companies are not interested in allocating apartments for social purposes as they can easily rent them to more reliable and stable tenants. Since 2011, municipal housing companies are required to act on a for-profit basis; this has raised an internal tension as far as social projects are concerned: they are public actors but at the same time they have to generate profits and reserving apartments for social purposes in the secondary housing market is not financially worthwhile. For this reason, only one out of four public housing companies in Stockholm accepted to reserve some dwellings to Housing First tenants. Private landlords have not been considered by the Municipality for procuring apartments for Housing First. This choice is mainly related to the lack of affordable privately rented dwellings. Despite a well-established rent-setting system, rents are very high in Stockholm, and private rents are anyway higher than public ones. Furthermore, in the idea of the Municipality, public providers would have been more disposed to adhere to the project than private ones, although this is not always the case, as it has been just described. Another reason is that, by being owned by the Municipality itself, public housing companies would have granted more control on both the tenants and the procedures. Another issue regards the location of the apartments. Rents in inner Stockholm are very high and Svenska Bostäder was not available for renting valuable apartments in the city centre. For this reason, all the apartments are located in the outer city, mainly in north-west Stockholm, which is considered as one of the most deprived parts of the city. Finally, Housing First undermines in a way the philosophical, universalistic, basis of the Swedish housing and welfare regime. It is indeed a selective practice that reserves selected apartments to selected tenants. It is not a new question, since each municipal housing company already reserves a stock of apartments for the use of the social services. However, Housing First is the first service whose goal is to provide people

with housing stability in the form of a direct contract between the housing company and the client. In the other cases the apartments are sublet by the social services in the secondary market for the necessary period only (e.g. to follow a treatment or while waiting in the queue for a public apartment) or for emergency situations. The Swedish housing regime is changing and the existence of a specific social housing sector within the public housing system is gradually becoming a fact. Nonetheless the implementation of Housing First on a large scale would probably raise a big debate and this aspect could hinder its development.

### *Competition and equality in access to housing*

Thanks to Housing First Stockholm, people who otherwise could never access affordable housing in the tight local housing market are granted access to housing. Hence, on one hand, the project fosters equality, by integrating into the housing market people who are outside. On the other hand, however, the tight situation of the housing market in Stockholm exacerbates issues of equality of access to housing, considering that finding, accessing and maintaining an apartment is also very difficult for households not assisted by social services. This creates long waiting lists for public housing and high competition. In the Housing First project, apartments with regular contracts (after the trial period) are assigned to homeless people who are not in the waiting list, while not assisted people must wait 5 to 20 years to get a public dwelling in Stockholm. Furthermore, Housing First beneficiaries are able to avoid the strict requirements that other people must fulfil to access the regular rental market, like proving the absence of previous debts and the possibility to pay three times the requested rent. Inequalities are also created among the group of homeless people living in the city: the beneficiaries of Housing First are selected among the same target group as the traditional interventions inspired by the staircase model. This creates inequalities since homeless people who access to Housing First have the opportunity to enter the regular housing market.

### *Tenure security*

Tenure security is a characteristic of the Swedish housing system, which also applies to Housing First tenants: once they sign a contract with a landlord, they are highly protected from almost every possible attempt of the landlord to get rid of them. This legislation is enabling because Housing First tenants, after the trial period, can enjoy real housing stability. This very stable housing situation is however not so easy to be achieved by the beneficiaries. In the trial period of 9 to 24 months contracts is signed by the district social services, which than sublet the apartments to the ex-homeless people, who are in a rather weak position, since

they cannot legally enforce any entitlement on the dwelling. During this period, the tenancy can be dismissed for several reasons, decided by the municipal social services and Svenska Bostäder. In particular, the latter is a rather powerful actor when deciding on situations of tenants who caused disturbances to the neighbours, who can be rather easily removed during the trial period. This circumstance may occur also after the trial period, when tenants enjoy full and stable tenancy rights. However, in this case they cannot be evicted unless a court decides against them, and this circumstance is rather rare: being in rent arrears is actually almost the only area of contention that can lead a court to decide against a tenant. After the trial period, the contract is transferred directly to the client, who starts to enjoy a stable housing with full tenancy rights. However, Svenska Bostäder has again a rather powerful position in this moment. It analyses the financial availability of the candidates before signing a direct contract with them. Furthermore, candidates are requested to repay possible previous debts with Svenska Bostäder, although also on a symbolic basis. These two conditions may represent again a barrier to access for some ex-homeless people, although a much softer barrier than the one posed by the normal housing market. The introduction of the trial period is a direct consequence of the situation in the housing market described above: according to the promoters of the project, no public or private housing company would have accepted to grant direct access to a tenancy contract for ex-homeless people without the inclusion of a trial period. This very same high tenancy protection, which assures housing stability to beneficiaries of Housing First who are successfully evaluated after the trial period, may also represent an hindrance for the development of Housing First in Sweden, in the sense that housing companies are very reluctant to participate to the project so as not to have to deal with problematic tenants they cannot evict.

### **3.6 Housing First in Vienna, Austria<sup>34</sup>**

#### ***3.6.1 Housing and homelessness in Vienna and Austria***

Austria is considered by Jim Kemeny within the group of countries with a unitary housing regime. The housing market is indeed balanced between the different forms of tenure. Home ownership accounts for 52 per cent of the national housing stock, and the data is steady since

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<sup>34</sup> The case study was conducted between October 2013 and January 2014. Where not otherwise specified, information derives from the research report drafted for the ImPROvE project (Wukovitsch, Novy and Weinzierl, 2015).

the 1980s. The rental sector, at 40 per cent, is one of the largest in Europe, and is considered as a viable alternative to home ownership for all population. This is the result of a tenure-neutral policy, which has not privileged one form of tenures over the others. Social housing too, at 20.1 per cent, is one of the most extended in Europe. Differently from many other European countries, the share of social housing in Austria is not significantly declining in the last decades. Criteria to access social housing are very extensive, with very high income ceilings, to the extent that 80 per cent of the population would be eligible for social housing (Scanlon et al., 2014). Nonetheless, municipal social housing tends to host low income households, while social housing provided by housing associations is attractive also for middle class. Consistently with the universal approach of unitary housing regimes, a rent regulation system applies equally to the public and private sectors; as a result, private rents exceed social ones only by 17 per cent on average. However, the rent regulation system is difficult to be grasped, because of many different rules and sub-rules applicable to different situations depending on the date of construction of the building, the date of conclusion of the rent agreement, the size of the dwelling, the owner of the dwelling, the location of the dwelling. In general, a growing number of private buildings constructed without public subsidies after the second world war actually underlie almost no rent restrictions, accounting for around 27 per cent of the private rental sector (Reinprecht, 2014). Entry costs are an important barrier to access to privately rented houses. In order to get a lease, tenants are required to pay three monthly rents in advance and a substantial deposit, corresponding to up to six monthly rents. The degree of tenancy protection is rather high in Austria, with the same system regulating both private and public rental sector. The duration of the contract may be unlimited, although fixed term contracts, of at least three years, are common in both sectors. The majority of the apartments, 82.1 per cent in Austria and 85.5 per cent in Vienna, are leased on an unlimited basis, but fixed-term contracts are increasing, especially in the private sector (Stadt Wien, 2015). The number of temporary rented apartments has increased by 56 per cent in Vienna between 2009 and 2012 (Stadt Wien, 2015). Rent arrears, severe breaches of the contract in terms of anti-social behaviour and illegal subletting are the conditions to which a public or private landlord can terminate a contract. Services to prevent evictions are particularly developed, especially in Vienna, and includes legal advice, assistance with social and housing benefits, assistance in negotiation with landlords, economic help to meet rent arrears. Nonetheless, 13,320 ordered evictions and 4,955 executed evictions have been reported in the country in 2013, 2,562 of which in Vienna (Schoibl, 2015). 90 per cent of



them are reported to be due to rent arrears. Evictions are reported to be decreasing, especially in Vienna where they were 4,136 in 2004 (Stadt Wien, 2015).

No reliable data on homelessness in Austria are available. The country lacks a national approach to data collection, with only some regions officially collecting data. The only available national survey has been made by BAWO (2009), the national umbrella organisation representing the interests of organisation working with the homeless, in 2006. The final data is of 37,000 people to be considered as homeless in Austria, that is 0.45 per cent of the population. It is a much higher percentage than in the other European countries, since the data considers as homeless the users of a broad range of services, including services to prevent eviction (around 15,000), which are also attended by people who need general advice on how to avoid rent arrears. Austria lacks a national strategy on homelessness, with only some regions having adopted a local strategy. Homelessness services are regulated and financed at the regional level, with the provision organised at both the regional and municipal level, and increasingly in charge of NGOs. Housing First is implemented only at the local level, with projects in Vienna and Salzburg.

Housing in Vienna is a much less problematic than in any other European capital city. The rental sector accounts for almost 80 per cent of the housing stock, which is a rather unique case in Europe. The average monthly rent is 529 euro in the private sector, 490 euro for houses rented by housing associations, and 361 euro for houses rented by the municipality (Hofmann, 2015). However, rents have been growing substantially since 2008, especially in the unregulated private sector. The average income of households applying for public assistance to prevent evictions has been steadily increasing, indicating that also middle class is encountering difficulties in paying the rent. This circumstance is pushing growing parts of the population in the regulated private and public market, which is under increasing pressure. Municipal housing sector is very large in Vienna, with almost 25 per cent of the housing stock pertaining to the municipality. Another 14 per cent belong to housing associations (Weinzierl et al., 2015). However, three circumstances limit the impact of such a large availability on the most vulnerable households. First, a major goal of the municipal housing policy is to avoid segregation and concentration of poverty, by promoting a social mix in all neighbourhoods. This goal is pursued by keeping high income ceilings for accessing municipal housing so that also households that could afford a privately rented or owned dwelling can choose to live in public houses. Second, family members of people having contracts with the municipality are

facilitated in taking over the contracts of their relatives. As a result, less than half of all municipal houses are *de facto* available for people on the waiting list, which corresponds to about 10,000 available apartments per year on a waiting list of 200,000 people (Weinzierl et al., 2015). Third, some of the most vulnerable households are excluded from access to municipal housing because of local connection rules or of their debt history.

9,770 people used homelessness services in Vienna in 2013, a number that is constantly increasing since 2000, with a 19.4 per cent increase compared to 2010 (Stadt Vienna, 2015). A local strategy on homelessness has been adopted in Vienna, and is called Vienna Integration Programme for Homeless People. Homelessness services in Vienna are considered as having a high standard. In 2011, the city offered 4,487 places distributed in different services, a 29.5 per cent more than in 2008, with night shelters losing salience in favour of specialist accommodation and supported housing, as reported in table 3.6.

**Table 3.6.** Number of places in different services for homeless people in Vienna.

	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
Night shelters	270	290	454	412
Transitional accommodation	1202	1246	1234	1225
Accommodation for specific target groups	321	323	322	379
Mother and child/ family facilities	236	267	267	297
Supervised housing in apartments	713	774	898	1098
Permanent housing/ socially supported housing	751	776	773	1076
Night shelters	-12.9%	7.4%	56.6%	-9.3%
Transitional accommodation	20.7%	3.7%	-1.0%	-0.7%
Accommodation for specific target groups	-3.6%	0.6%	-0.3%	17.7%
Mother and child/ family facilities		13.1%	0.0%	11.2%
Supervised housing in apartments	0.0%	8.6%	16.0%	22.3%
Permanent housing/ socially supported housing	43.0%	3.3%	-0.4%	39.2%

Source: Riesenfelder et al. 2012, 18 quoted in Wukovitsch et al., 2015

Within this context of services moving towards the provision of housing and mobile social support, Housing First has been introduced in 2012 by local government decision.

### ***3.6.2 Genesis and description of the Housing First project in Vienna***

The origins of Housing First Vienna date back to the mid-2000s, when Vienna Social Fund, the city's outsourced organisation for the provision of social services, started to

elaborate on a re-organisation of services for homeless people, especially homeless families. An experimental project, called *wohnbasis by wieder wohnen*, was established in 2005, with the aim of replacing institutional forms of accommodation for families with children with independent apartments in the municipal housing sector. Despite not being officially labelled as Housing First, the project was selected for contributing to the influential research on Housing First in Europe, mentioned in chapter two (Busch-Geertsema, 2013). Drawing on this first experiment, the new political coalition of Social democrats and Greens governing Vienna since 2010 decided to invest on Housing First as an evidence-based practice to restructure the local provision of homelessness services. A study on the potential of implementing Housing First in the city was commissioned to the non-profit organisation *Neunerhaus*. *Neunerhaus* was founded in 2000 by a group of volunteers committed in finding a solution for homeless people living next to a railway station in Vienna. It rapidly grew into a professional organisation that runs several emergency accommodation and temporary housing and provides social and health support to homeless people in the city. The study was then used as a basis for the implementation of a pilot project in 2012, managed by *Neunerhaus* and funded by the Vienna Social Fund with an annual budget of 490,000 Euros.

Housing First Vienna is generally targeted to homeless people or people at risk of homelessness. The project is thus not focused on chronically homeless people with severe mental illness, as is in the original model. People considered as in danger of causing harm to themselves, to others or to the environment where they live are excluded from the project. This group indeed includes some of the homeless people with severe mental illness and/or drug addiction who would be the primary target in programmes strictly following the Pathways to Housing model. In order to be eligible for the project, households should have an income, deriving from work, pensions, unemployment benefits, minimum income, child benefit, housing benefit. The pilot project included 69 households, for a total of 131 people, 84 adults and 47 children. 45 per cent were single households, 36 per cent were single parents with children, 13 per cent were couples with children, and 6 per cent were couples. On 84 adults, 70 were Austrian nationals, 6 EU citizens and 8 non-EU citizens (Neunerhaus, 2015).

Housing is mainly provided in the private rental sector or in the social sector managed by housing associations. They are scattered-site independent housing, spread in the whole city. *Neunerhaus* dedicates relevant energies in establishing and maintaining good relationships with housing providers. To facilitate the provision of affordable apartments, a special

platform called *Erst Wohnen* (the German translation for Housing First) has been established in cooperation with 17 selected private and non-profit housing companies, and managed to find 74 apartments for the project. 70 per cent of them were owned by housing associations, 20 per cent by private landlords, and 10 per cent by the municipality (Neunerhaus, 2015). The tenancy contract is unlimited and is directly signed between the beneficiaries and the landlords, without any mediation nor any probation period. The average monthly rent, included utilities, is 289.75 Euros for 39 m<sup>2</sup> apartments and 425.14 Euros for 66m<sup>2</sup> apartments (Neunerhaus, 2015). If tenants fall into rent arrears, *Neunerhaus* mediates between the tenant and the landlord in order to work out a repayment plan, although the final responsibility of paying the rent is fully in the hand of the tenants.

Social support is provided separately from housing and is highly individualised. Differently from the original model, it is not provided on an open-ended basis, also because of the target group, which is not composed of people with high support needs. In 17 cases social support has been stopped: in 1 case because of the death of the user, in 1 case following the eviction of a tenant, in 15 cases because of a joint decision between the tenant and the Housing First staff. The average duration of the social support is 15 months (Neunerhaus, 2015).

At the time of writing, an evaluation of the pilot project is being carried out in order to decide on further implementation of Housing First within the municipal system of provision of homelessness services.

### ***3.6.3 The housing in Housing First in Vienna: issues at stake***

#### *Housing availability and affordability*

The structure of the Viennese housing market is fostering the implementation of the Housing First project. The large availability of rented houses, which are the 80 per cent of the city housing stock, makes it quite easy to find houses to be rented for the project, both in the private and public sectors. The rather low rents are another fostering factors, making the procurement of affordable housing not so difficult like in other European cities. This favourable framework has been pursued through tenure-neutral public housing policies, which historically aimed at creating an affordable market also by making public housing attractive for a large part of the populations. Things are slightly changing, with a growing unregulated

private sector, where rents are rapidly growing. However, the extent of the sector is still limited, with 73 per cent of privately rented houses still under rent regulation.

Within this favourable context, *Neunerhaus* was able to actively manage the procurement of affordable housing for the project by establishing a specific platform including 17 housing companies and associations. The platform rapidly turned into a successful story on how to find apartments for Housing First, which has itself being fostered by the structure of the local and national housing market.

#### *Competition and equality in access to housing*

The very large social housing sector, with the municipality owning almost 25 of the total stock, grants a wide access to social housing to mid-low income households, thus not creating specific issues of equal access to housing. Beneficiaries of Housing First Vienna, mainly placed in the private sector or in the public sector owned by housing associations, are not directly competing markets with other needy households, who are mainly settled in the vast municipal housing sector.

#### *Tenure security*

The high degree of tenancy protection experienced by Austrian tenants also applies to Housing First beneficiaries, who sign direct unlimited contracts with the landlords. This clearly fosters housing stability for ex-homeless people. The general tendency is however towards an increase in the number of fixed-term contracts, which have grown by 56 per cent in the last three years in Vienna. Should this tendency continue, it could create problems to housing stability also for Housing First tenants. The most relevant risk for housing stability is falling into rent arrears. The project does not provide a fund for sustaining rents, which are in the full responsibility of tenants, selected also in consideration of their available income. No problems with anti-social behaviour or disturbances have been reported, also due to the type of selected users.

## **4. Housing inclusion of homeless people through Housing First: potential, limits and strategies**

This chapter presents the main findings of the research in relation to the potential of Housing First for including homeless people into the housing market. The meaning of the expression “including homeless people into the housing market” is clarified in the first section of the chapter by briefly recalling the theoretical framework provided in chapter one. The following sections discuss on the scope of Housing First for housing inclusion of homeless people: who, amongst the homeless, is and could potentially be included into the housing market through Housing First, and how many homeless people are and could potentially be included into the housing market through Housing First; the extent to which Housing First may effectively be a strategy for including homeless people into the housing market under different structural and institutional conditions related to specific national and local housing systems; the strategies adopted by Housing First practices to cope with the structural opportunities and limits. The final section provides a more general discussion on the relationship between the potential of Housing First for including homeless people into the housing market and the different types of housing and welfare regimes.

### **4.1 Defining the meaning of housing inclusion: homeless people and the housing market**

Homeless people are, per definition, excluded from the housing market. Many services targeted to this heterogeneous group aim at physically, mentally or socially recovering them, but keep them *de facto* outside the housing market. Housing First came to change this scenario, by providing its beneficiaries with access to housing in the regular housing market. We can visualise this process as in figure 4.1.

**Figure 4.1** Inclusion process of homeless people into the housing market

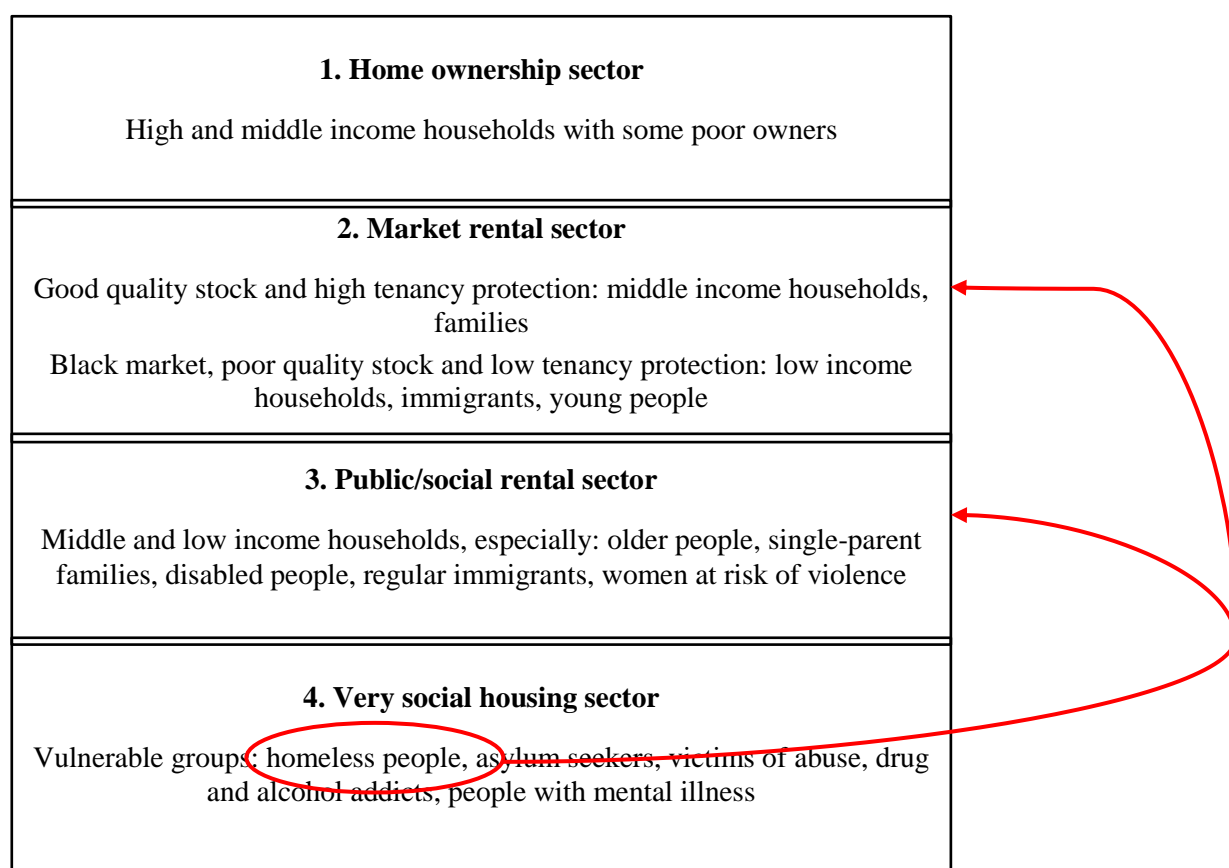


Figure 4.1 is clearly an oversimplification. Such a structure is common to all housing systems, but with substantial differences in the extent and composition of the sectors. In countries characterised by a unitary rental market (Austria and Sweden in this study), the different income groups are more equally distributed among home ownership, market and social rental sector, although mid-low income households are increasingly segregated in the rental market. In the dual housing systems (Hungary, Italy and the UK in this study), the distribution is more segmented, with the social housing sector hosting low income households, the private sector mainly housing the mid-low income groups and the home ownership sector housing the middle and upper class. For the most vulnerable the outcome is similar in all the systems: they live in the very social housing sector, albeit the extent of the sector in each locality is very difficult to quantify. As for homelessness, the very social housing sector includes night shelters and other emergency accommodations, hostels, special shelters, temporary housing, indeed all the accommodations based on the staircase model, and privately arranged insecure or inadequate housing, i.e. mobile homes, occupied dwellings or

temporary accommodation by relatives or friends. Within this framework, including homeless people into the housing market implies moving them away from the very social housing sector to one of the other three sectors, but essentially the market or social rental sector. In this way, they are supposed to enjoy all the three domains constituting a home, that is the physical, the social and the legal domain, and exit therefore their condition of home-lessness. The legal device that certifies the inclusion into the housing market is the signature of a regular tenancy contract, with the beneficiary being entitled to the same rights and duties of all the other tenants in the housing system.

#### **4.2 Defining the scope of Housing First: which and how many homeless people are to be included?**

Following the ETHOS definition of homelessness, presented in chapter 1.1.2 and used as a basis for this work, by homeless people we mean all the people not experiencing one of the three domains composing the concept of home: the physical domain, that is the availability of a suitable living space; the social domain, that is the possibility to protect one's privacy and enjoy social relations; and the legal domain, that is the disposal of a legal security of occupation. More precisely, the ETHOS definition identifies four conceptual categories constituting homelessness: rooflessness, houselessness, insecure housing and inadequate housing. Roofless and houseless people constitute the so-called "primary homelessness", while people living in insecure and inadequate housing constitute the "secondary homelessness". Should all of them be included into the housing market? Provided that the answer is yes, should they all be included through Housing First? According to the Pathways Housing First model, the answer is no. Pathways Housing First is not targeted to all homeless people, but to a specific group: chronic homeless people with severe mental illness, which could be intended as a sub-group within primary homelessness. However, as mentioned in chapter 2, European variations on Housing First are often targeted to different groups. Table 4.1 summarises the target groups of the five case studies of this research.



**Table 4.1.** Target groups of the five case studies and correspondence with the ETHOS categories.

Project	Target groups	ETHOS categories
HF Bologna	Chronic homeless people (no substance users) Families with children experiencing housing hardship	Roofless and houseless Insecure and inadequate housing
HF Budapest	Homeless people settled in a forest in the district of Kőbánya	Roofless and houseless
HF London	Chronic homeless people with mental illness and/or substance abuse	Roofless and houseless
HF Stockholm	Chronic homeless people with mental illness and/or substance abuse	Roofless and houseless
HF Vienna	Homeless people (no severe mental illness) People at risk of homelessness	Roofless and houseless Insecure and inadequate housing

*Source: Author's elaboration on Saruis, Colombo and Kazepov, 2016; Bernát and Kubik, 2015; Cools and Oosterlynck, 2015; Colombo, Saruis and Kazepov, 2016; Wukovitsch, Novy and Weinzierl, 2015.*

The initiatives in London and Stockholm most accurately reproduce the target group of the original model: chronic homeless people with mental illness and/or substance abuse. In Budapest, the target group is defined by its location more than by the profile of the people to be included: Housing First is indeed the solution proposed to re-house a group of homeless people living in slums in a forest within the district of Kőbánya. The initiatives in Bologna and Vienna include chronically homeless people, but exclude, respectively, people with drug addiction and people with severe mental illness. Reasons for excluding such sub-groups are in the assumption that homeless people with substance abuse are not rapidly employable as required by the project in Bologna, and that people with severe mental illness are not autonomous enough to live by themselves, in Vienna. In both cases, another target group beyond more or less chronic homeless people is considered, that is families with children experiencing housing hardship in Bologna, and people at risk of homelessness in Vienna. In both cases, Housing First is therefore used as a strategy to include also “secondary homeless people” in the housing market, that is people living in insecure and inadequate housing in the ETHOS typology. Both cases perceive themselves as successful in including both primary and secondary homeless people into the housing market, which could lead us to the conclusion that Housing First may be a valid approach to include all homeless people into the housing market. Such a conclusion would support the auspices of the European Consensus Conference on Homelessness (see chapter 2.2.3), which called for an adoption of the housing-led approach, included Housing First, to address “all forms of homelessness” (ECCH, 2011, p.

14), and of the final report of the Housing First Europe project: “There is no reason why other homeless people with less severe support needs should have to endure preparatory periods of several years before they are re-housed, if the necessary support can just as easily and much more effectively be provided in regular permanent housing” (Busch-Geertsema, 2013, p. 325). However, we are referring to two small-size projects targeted to a limited number of beneficiaries: to what extent could instead Housing First be effective in potentially including all the homeless people into the housing market? Before discussing the conditions under which Housing First may, or may not, be an effective strategy to structurally address all forms of homelessness, we need another information: how many people are and could potentially be included into the housing market through Housing First?

As extensively discussed in chapter 1.3.1, the measurement of homelessness is a long-term controversial issue. In some cases, the available data are not reliable, and in any case they are definitely not comparable, since they were collected by different agencies, with different methods and following different definitions. This is valid both for national and local data. Table 4.2 reports the actual number of homeless people involved in the five case studies, and the estimated potential number of homeless people to be included in Housing First programmes in the cities where they are implemented.

**Table 4.2.** Number of beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries of the five Housing First initiatives.

<b>Project</b>	<b>Beneficiaries</b>	<b>Estimated potential beneficiaries</b>	<b>% on total population</b>
HF Bologna	23 people	1,032	0.3
HF Budapest	8 people	5,000	0.3
HF London	10 people	17,180	0.2
HF Stockholm	35 people	2,866	0.3
HF Vienna	69 households	9,770	0.5

*Source: Author’s elaboration on Saruis, Colombo and Kazepov, 2016; Bernát and Kubik, 2015; Cools and Oosterlynck, 2015; Colombo, Saruis and Kazepov, 2016; Wukovitsch, Novy and Weinzierl, 2015 (Beneficiaries). Istat, 2014; Busch-Geertsema et al., 2014; Government of the UK, Department for Communities and Local Government, Homelessness Statistics<sup>35</sup>; Stockholms Stad, 2012; Stadt Vienna, 2015 (Estimated potential beneficiaries); Author’s elaboration (% on total population).*

An important statement must be immediately made about table 4.2: data on estimated potential beneficiaries are neither precise nor comparable. The figure of Bologna is extracted from the national survey on homelessness in Italy, and includes people using homelessness

<sup>35</sup> Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/homelessness-statistics>

services in the city. The figure of Budapest is an estimate derived from the national count organised by Hungarian service providers in February 2014, which roughly includes users of homelessness services; the survey estimates that around half of the around 10,000 homeless people in Hungary live in Budapest. The figure of London only includes the so-called “statutory homeless”, that is homeless people officially accepted by local authorities under the auspices of the national Housing Act, thus excluding single homeless people unless they pertain to priority groups (disabled people, young people under 16 and victims of domestic violence); hence, it is far from representing a reliable data on homelessness in the city. Stockholm figure is the result of a one-off night count made by the City of Stockholm in collaboration with the service providers, and it also includes people temporarily hosted by relatives and friends. The figure of Vienna includes users of homelessness services in the city, included preventative services for people at risk of eviction. Drawing on these numbers, the estimated number of potential beneficiaries of Housing First in the five cities ranges from 0.2 to 0.5 per cent of the total population. However, numbers are most probably very much underestimated. With the partial exception of data in Stockholm and Vienna, they represent a rough estimate of “primary homeless people” only, that is roofless and houseless people in the ETHOS typology. Secondary homelessness is excluded because of lack of data, but it should theoretically be included, if Housing First has to become a strategy to address all forms of homelessness. Data on the potential extent of the target group of chronic homeless people with mental illness in each city are not available; it would be valuable to assess the number of potential beneficiaries of Housing First if we only consider the target group of the Pathways Housing First model. Most of the national and local surveys on homelessness report that between 30 and 50 per cent of the homeless population suffer from mental illness (Busch-Geertsema et al., 2014). This information is however not enough to infer that the population of homeless people with mental illness in the five cities is between 30 and 50 per cent of the total homeless population. In conclusion, the real extent of the potential population to be included in the housing market through Housing First is unknown. We can only rely on imprecise data, which can however provide us with an estimate of the extent of the phenomenon to be potentially handled through Housing First.

### **4.3 The potential and limits of Housing First in contemporary housing systems**

Coming to the core of this research, we now introduce the variable of structural and institutional conditions characterising housing systems that frame the implementation of the

five Housing First initiatives. The call for inclusion of homeless people in the housing market may indeed be a universal concern, but it certainly has substantial context-sensitive implications. Many factors at different scales influence the extent to which homeless people may be included in the housing market through Housing First, and the way through which this housing inclusion may occur. Those factors pertain to different interrelated spheres: national welfare and housing regimes, local welfare and housing configurations, global and local socio-economic dynamics, labour market dynamics, global financial flows, just to cite some of them. Consistently with the interest of this work, structural and institutional conditions related to national and local housing systems will be analysed more in detail; general observations on the interplay with welfare regimes will also be provided. As extensively described in chapter one, global, national and local configurations and outcomes of housing markets and policies play a critical role in determining the housing situation of low-income households and socially vulnerable groups. These structural conditions also affect the implementation of Housing First programmes and projects, mainly in four senses: the availability of apartments on local markets for housing the homeless through Housing First; their affordability for very low-income people, like Housing First tenants are; the degree of competition between different individuals and social groups for accessing affordable housing, and the possible impact of housing inclusion through Housing First on the principle of equality of access to housing; and the effective degree of housing stability experienced by Housing First tenants.

#### ***4.3.1 Housing First and housing availability***

Many Housing First initiatives across the world report difficulties in finding apartments for their users, included the case studies of this research. The extent of these difficulties highly varies depending on local and national features of the housing markets. The basic factor influencing the availability of housing for the purpose of housing inclusion of homeless people through Housing First is the extent of the rental sector, provided that Housing First includes the homeless into the rental housing sector. Obviously, the simple number of available houses for rent is not a sufficient condition: those houses should be affordable for the users of Housing First and, more generally, there should be enough affordable houses for everybody, and not only for homeless people. These two more qualitative facets will be discussed in the next two sections, while this section concentrates on the pure quantitative availability of rented houses. Table 4.3 provides information on the extent of the total housing

stock, the total rental stock, the private rental stock, the social rental stock, and the ratio between the number of households and the housing stock in the five cities of the research.

**Table 4.3.** Number of households, total housing stock, total rental stock, private rental stock, and social stock in the five cities of the research, absolute numbers and percentage on the total housing stock, 2011\*

City	Number of households	Housing stock	Rental stock	Private rental stock	Social rental stock
Bologna	194,042	192,573	57,279	44,529	12,750
Budapest	819,708	905,405	95,976	56,725	39,251
London	3,266,170	3,318,000	1,663,000	880,000	783,000
Stockholm	407,406	397,790	175,590	109,152	66,438
Vienna	837,478	950,000	760,000	390,000	370,000
City	Houses per 100 households	% on total housing stock	% on total housing stock	% on total housing stock	% on total housing stock
Bologna	99	100	29.7	23.1	6.6
Budapest	110	100	10.6	6.3	4.3
London	102	100	50.1	26.5	23.6
Stockholm	98	100	44.1	27.4	16.7
Vienna	113	100	80.0	41.0	39.0

\* Data on Stockholm refer to 2014

*Source: Author's elaboration on Comune di Bologna, 2014; Hungarian Central Statistic Office - Population Census 2011<sup>36</sup>; Government of the UK, Department for Communities and Local Government, Collection Dwelling stock<sup>37</sup>; Stockholms Stadt - Statistics<sup>38</sup>; Levy-Vreulant and Reinprecht, 2014.*

Table 4.3 shows that local structures of housing market differ a lot among each other. Very in theory, in each city there should be a house for each household, with a small housing shortage in Stockholm and Bologna, and a housing surplus in London, Budapest and Vienna. Obviously, many caveats affect these data: the number of resident households is not the number of households actually living in the city; the quality of the stock should also be considered, not only its quantity; and there are a number of economic behaviours that interfere with the perfect allocation of a house to each households. Indeed, this ratio is very much rough and not reliable but it shows us that, potentially, the housing stocks of London and, especially, Budapest and Vienna could be enough for meeting the basic housing needs of their resident population. More relevant is a rapid analysis of the availability of houses for rent, and for social rent, in the five cities. By slightly elaborating on the classification of

<sup>36</sup> Available at: <http://www.ksh.hu/nepszamlalas/?lang=en>

<sup>37</sup> Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/dwelling-stock-including-vacants>

<sup>38</sup> Available at: <http://statistik.stockholm.se/detaljerad-statistik>

social housing sectors proposed by Scanlon et al. (2014), that is large, medium and small social housing sectors, we can classify the five cities into four groups according to the size of the social housing sector. Cities with very large social housing sectors, namely Vienna, where the sector accounts for more than 40 per cent of the housing stock; cities with large social housing sectors, namely London, where the sector makes up between 20 and 40 per cent of the total housing stock; cities with medium social housing sectors, Stockholm, where the sector is between 10 and 20 per cent of the stock; cities with small social housing sectors, Bologna and Budapest, where it accounts for less than 10 per cent of the stock. We can reproduce the same exercise, by classifying cities according to the size of the overall rental sector. In this case, we consider Vienna as a city with a very large rental sector, accounting for more than 80 per cent of the total stock; London and Stockholm as cities with large rental sectors, where they account for between 40 and 80 per cent of the total housing stock; Bologna as a city with a medium rental sector, between 20 and 40 per cent of the stock; Budapest as a city with a small rental sector, where it makes up less than 20 per cent of the housing stock. Cities with large rental sectors and large social sectors are a more favourable context for Housing First, at least in theory, since there are more houses available for Housing First tenants and for addressing the housing needs of different individuals and social groups. Pure housing availability, however, is just the starting point, but it means nothing if we do not consider other dynamics of the housing systems.

#### ***4.3.2 Housing First and housing affordability***

The users of Housing First are required to pay the rent of the apartments they get access to through Housing First. For this reason, and for reasons of general sustainability of the programme, rents have to be low enough to be affordable for homeless people to be included into the housing market through Housing First, who usually have very low incomes. Table 4.4 provides information on the amount of the rent to be paid by Housing First tenants of the five case studies, and on the average rent in the cities where they are implemented.

**Table 4.4.** Monthly rent paid by Housing First tenants, and average monthly rent in the city.

City	Housing provision	Rent paid by HF users	Average monthly rent in the mkt sector
Bologna	Private market	150-200 €	568 €
Budapest	Social housing	65 €	460 €
London	Private market	n.a.	1,249 € <sup>1</sup>
Stockholm	Public housing	30% of income	675 € <sup>2</sup>
Vienna	Private market	289 – 425 € <sup>3</sup>	482 €

<sup>1</sup> 1,124 £, conversion rate 10/10/2016

<sup>2</sup> 6,518 SEK, conversion rate 10/10/2016

<sup>3</sup> Rent per apartment, each apartment houses 1 to 3 people

*Source: Author's elaboration on Saruis, Colombo and Kazepov, 2016; Bernát and Kubik, 2015; Cools and Oosterlynck, 2015; Colombo, Saruis and Kazepov, 2016; Wukovitsch, Novy and Weinzierl, 2015 (Rent paid by Housing First users); VII Rapporto sul mercato delle locazioni in Italia<sup>39</sup>; Hungarian Central Statistic Office<sup>40</sup>; Government of the UK, Department for Communities and Local Government, 2015; Statistics Sweden<sup>41</sup>; Stadt Wien, 2015 (Average monthly rent in the market sector).*

As evident from table 4.4, Housing First tenants pay a significantly reduced rent compared with market rents in the city where they get access to the rental market. This is not enough to state that they receive affordable housing, since we should relate the paid rent with the persons' income, but this latter data is not available. Rent is surely affordable in Stockholm, where it is income-based: Housing First tenants pay no more than 30 per cent of their income for rent, with the rest paid by the Municipality, if needed. In all the other cases, the rent is cost-based, that is Housing First tenants are required to pay the rent as negotiated by the Housing First promoters with the private or public housing providers, which are generally very favourable compared with not negotiated rents in the free urban housing market. The assessment of the potential of Housing First for including homeless people into the housing market is made difficult by lack of reliable data on general housing affordability at the city level. As described in chapter 1.2.2, housing affordability is defined by referring to two indicators: the share of income spent on housing, which should be less than 30 per cent, and the housing cost overburden rate, that measures the percentage of the population living in households where the total housing costs represent more than 40 per cent of disposable

<sup>39</sup> Available at: <https://goo.gl/OaXn9B>

<sup>40</sup> Available at: <https://goo.gl/qc9d3X>

<sup>41</sup> Available at: <https://goo.gl/kNySQH>

income. Those two indicators are only available for London, where tenants spend 72 per cent of their income on housing, reduced to 60 per cent including the effects of housing allowances (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2015), and Stockholm, where they spend, on average, 27 per cent of their income on housing<sup>42</sup>. No reliable data are available for the cities of Bologna, Budapest and Vienna. Reliable and comparable data are only available at the national level, and are reported in table 4.5.

**Table 4.5.** Housing affordability in five selected countries for the general population and for population below poverty line, 2014.

Country	General population		Low-income households	
	Share of income spent on housing	Housing cost overburden rate	Share of income spent on housing	Housing cost overburden rate
Austria	18.3	6.6	39.5	36.7
Sweden	22.0	7.8	45.4	40.5
Hungary	24.4	11.4	38.2	34.8
Italy	17.1	8.5	33.9	31.9
UK	25.1	12.1	46.6	40.8

Source: Eurostat.

Considering the general population, the share of disposable income spent on housing is everywhere, on average, under the threshold of the 30 per cent, with more favourable situations in Italy and Austria. Less than 10 per cent of the households spend more than 40 per cent of their disposable income on housing in Austria, Sweden and Austria. The situation is much harder for households living below the poverty line, who spend everywhere more than 30 per cent of their income on housing, with the highest data in the UK and Sweden, where they spend more than 45 per cent of their income on housing. In the two countries, more than 40 per cent of the low-income households spend more than 40 per cent of their income on housing, with percentages ranging from 32 to 36 per cent in Italy, Hungary and Austria. These data refer to housing affordability in general, that is to both home owners and tenants. UK and Sweden appear the two countries with a most evident problem of housing affordability, especially for households with low income, to which Housing First users usually pertain. These data remain however in the background of our analysis, since we would need more precise information on the cities of the research. Many researches show that, broadly speaking, housing affordability is a more severe issue in capital cities and big cities (CECODHAS, 2012), that is the case of the five contexts of our research. These information remains too in the very background of our analysis, being not supported by empirical data. As a general

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<sup>42</sup> <https://goo.gl/vC52hf>



statement, we can observe that the cities of London and Stockholm are two contexts characterised by high rents, with in the background a difficulty of low-income households in accessing and maintaining affordable housing in the country. Despite being a capital city too, Vienna presents a slighter situation, in terms of both rent levels and data on housing affordability at the national level. Bologna and Budapest present a more blurred situation in terms of affordability, with rent levels rather high compared to incomes, especially in Budapest, but with a situation of relatively not so severe problem of affordability at the national level, especially in Italy. As already mentioned, data are not enough sound to build any reliable typology; they just provide us with some background information on the possibility of including homeless people, especially a broad group of homeless people both in primary and secondary homelessness, through Housing First, which may be limited by the low affordability of available apartments, especially in certain contexts like London and Stockholm.

#### ***4.3.3 Housing First and equality in access to housing***

As sociologists, we should always be concerned about the effects of certain policy measures or initiatives on society as a whole. Including homeless people into the housing market through Housing First implies providing them with a stable, if not permanent, housing solution with all the associated rights and duties, or to say it better: to provide them with access to affordable and stable housing. Certainly, this is a way to grant access to affordable housing to people who otherwise could afford neither to buy nor to rent a house, often neither in the social housing sector. Hence, on one hand, Housing First fixes this situation, by including into the housing market people who are outside; in this sense, it is a way to accomplish to the public task of redistribution. However, as repeatedly pointed out across this work, affordable housing is an increasingly scarce resource for which different individuals and social groups are in competition. Homeless people included in Housing First services get direct access to apartments in the regular housing market, either in the public or private rental sector, while access to housing is not granted for many other vulnerable individuals and groups. Access to housing is regulated by public housing policy, which determines allocation criteria for public houses and can also promote or hinder access to private housing by means of different policy tools.

In some cases, users of Housing First are assigned a publicly or socially rented dwelling, jumping the often-long waiting lists that include all other eligible households. In Stockholm, 551,756 people are registered in the waiting list for municipal housing; 64,618 of them registered in 2015 against a number of 12,384 public houses assigned by the municipal housing agency in the same year. As a result, the average queuing time is 8.2 years, and can be of up to 16 years in the inner city.<sup>43</sup> Many households who cannot meet the requirements for accessing the regular rental market are pushed in the so-called secondary housing market, i.e. in apartments temporarily sublet by social services, or in the black market, i.e. in subletted apartments or rooms with no rent control and no tenure security. Homeless people in Housing First get instead a direct contract with full tenancy rights in the regular housing market, at least after a trial period of nine to 24 months. An excerpt from an interview with a social worker of the City of Stockholm well grasps this situation:

*“Ordinary people with no problems cannot get a flat. So someone told me “my son has worked for so many years, and he cannot find a flat, do I have to tell him to start taking drugs, so you will give him a flat?”. It is horrible that it turns out into a competition, but that’s the situation today: our target group competes with the normal people”.*

Similar problems are reported in the case of Budapest, where the beneficiaries of Housing First get access to a municipal house in a context of high scarcity of affordable housing. Official data on length of the waiting list and number of social houses assigned per year are not available, but interviewees report long waiting list, in terms of tens of thousands of people, and very few municipal houses assigned every year, in terms of few hundreds of units. Many poor households are excluded from access to housing because of the lack of available social housing and the requirement for proving to be able to cover the renovation costs, which are instead covered by private funds from an international NGO only for Housing First tenants. On the contrary, the broad public housing sector in Vienna limits the impact of Housing First on equality; beneficiaries of Housing First, mainly housed in the public sector owned by housing associations or, to a lesser extent, in the private sector, are not directly competing with other needy households, who are mainly settled in the vast municipal housing sector.

In other cases, users of Housing First get access to a privately rented dwelling at very favourable legal and economic conditions. This allows them not to directly compete with individuals and groups struggling for access to social housing. However, in a context of

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<sup>43</sup> <https://bostad.stockholm.se/statistik/statistik/tjansten/>. Last consultation 5<sup>th</sup> October 2016.

scarcity of affordable housing, the issue of equal access to housing is not avoided, since those on the waiting lists for social housing are not supported to enter the private market, like Housing First tenants are, for instance in Bologna, thanks to the mediation of the agencies running the project. The promoters of Camden Housing First, in London, deliberately decided not to make social houses available for Housing First users, not to interfere with public allocation rules. In England, homeless people are entitled to access a social house only if they are formally accepted as homeless by Local Authorities under the auspices of the Housing Act. This includes priority groups like adults with dependent children, disabled people, young people under 16, victims of domestic violence. Housing First beneficiaries are the so-called non-statutory homeless, not pertaining to priority groups. This integrates excluded people in the housing market, but creates a contradictory situation. Statutory homeless, who are legally entitled to a house, are settled in temporary housing solutions with no related tenancy rights. Non-statutory homeless included in Camden Housing First, who would not be legally entitled to a house, get access to regular and stable housing. In a sense, Camden Housing First challenges the English dual system of homelessness, but without a clear debate on how to grant access to affordable and stable housing to anyone.

#### ***4.3.4 Housing First and tenure security***

Housing stability is a prime objective of Housing First. To pursue this goal, the simple provision of a house is not enough. Beneficiaries of Housing First should also enjoy full tenancy rights on a long-term basis, ideally on a permanent basis. It is therefore crucial to consider the degree of tenure security experienced by tenants of Housing First, which is in strict correlation with tenure security granted to tenants in the different housing systems. As described in chapter one, the degree of tenure security varies from country to country and also locally. Prime factors in the assessment of the degree of experienced tenure security are the extent of legal entitlements deriving from the contract, the duration of the contract, and the extent to which tenancy may be unilaterally dismissed by the landlord. Table 4.6 describes these conditions in the case studies of the research.

**Table 4.6.** Factors influencing the degree of tenure security experienced by Housing First beneficiaries in the five case studies.

Case study	Housing provider	Legal holder of the contract	Standard duration of the contract	Conditions for dismissing a tenancy
HF Bologna	Private landlords	Association	4 years	Rent arrears; severe disturbances
HF Budapest	Municipality	Tenants	1 year	Rent arrears; severe disturbances
HF London	Private landlords	Tenants	6 months/1 year	Rent arrears; severe disturbances; anti-social behaviour
HF Stockholm	Municipal housing company	Municipality then tenants	Up to 25 years	Rent arrears; severe disturbances
HF Vienna	Social housing associations and private landlords	Tenants	Unlimited	Rent arrears; severe disturbances

*Source: Author's elaboration.*

The actual full enjoyment of tenancy rights is bounded to being the legal holder of a tenancy contract. This indeed entails the full entitlements to legal rights of tenancy. The guidelines of Pathways Housing First stress the need for the users to directly sign a contract with the landlord, in order to enjoy full tenancy rights and housing stability. It is this signature, indeed, that certifies the integration of ex-homeless people into the regular housing market. Nonetheless, they also recognise that, especially in some contexts, it may be difficult to find landlords who are willing to provide apartments to ex-homeless people, often perceived as troubling tenants. Therefore, a mediation of the promoters of Housing First may be necessary to achieve the aim of procuring houses for Housing First users. In this sense, the contract may be signed between the landlord and the organisation managing the project, which guarantees on the payment of the rent and, in general, on the full observance of the contract. This situation should be in any case temporary, with the user who should take over the contract after a trial period. This very same procedure is applied in the case of Stockholm, where a trial period of 9 to 24 months is established. During this trial period the contract is signed by the municipal social services, which then sublet the apartments to the ex-homeless people. Under these conditions, the tenancy can be dismissed for several reasons, decided by the municipal social services and the municipal housing provider. In particular, the latter is a rather powerful actor when deciding on situations of tenants who caused disturbances to the neighbours, who

can be rather easily removed during the trial period. After the trial period, the contract is transferred directly to the client, who starts to enjoy a stable housing with full tenancy rights. However, the housing company has again a rather powerful position in this moment. It analyses the financial availability of the candidates before signing a direct contract with them. In Bologna, contracts are signed between the private landlords and the organisation managing the project. The beneficiaries are thus not legally entitled to any right connected with the house where they live. This leads to the paradoxical situation that they can be still formally considered as homeless, because of exclusion from the legal domain of home. In the other cases, Budapest, London and Vienna, tenants immediately sign a direct contract with housing providers, and immediately start to enjoy full tenancy rights.

Once they get a direct contract, the effective degree of tenancy protection depends on contextual conditions. For instance, tenure security is a characteristic of the Swedish housing system, which also applies to Housing First tenants: once they sign a contract with a landlord, they are highly protected from almost every possible attempt of the landlord to get rid of them. They cannot be evicted unless a court decides against them, and this circumstance is rather rare: being in rent arrears is actually almost the only area of contention that can lead a court to decide against a tenant. This is the reason why Housing First promoters had to introduce a probation period to convince a housing company to participate in the project. Similarly, a high degree of tenancy protection is experienced by Austrian tenants, whose most relevant risk for housing stability is falling into rent arrears. The project does not provide a fund for sustaining rents, which are in the full responsibility of tenants, selected also in consideration of their available income. In Budapest and London, conditions are much more unfavourable to tenure security. In Budapest, beneficiaries of the project are applied the one-year contract increasingly adopted by municipalities for all social contracts. After one year, the contract is renewed if the tenant proves to be able to continue paying the social rent and has not met with rent arrears or severe breaches of the contract. In London, most tenancies come with a six months or one year contract, which is definitely inadequate to foster housing stability. Every six months or one year the landlord can decide to get rid of the tenant, although obviously the tenancy may be extended, and this is usually the case. A threat to tenure security also in the case of unlimited contracts is anti-social behaviour by the tenant. In this case, the landlord may indeed get rid of the tenant quite easily. Several Camden Housing First beneficiaries were charged with anti-social behaviour during their life as homeless; a marked reduction of this kind of behaviours has been reported after they accessed an independent house with

social support. Housing First tenants would enjoy a greater tenure security in socially rented housing. There an unlimited contract, at least after a probation period, is much more common, and landlords must obtain a favourable court decision before evicting tenants. However, due to the aforementioned structural reasons, social houses are not available for Camden Housing First beneficiaries.

#### ***4.3.5 Potential and limits of Housing First: a summary***

Table 4.7 sums up the main information on structural and institutional conditions that characterise the five housing systems framing the case studies of the research, and their outcome on the potential of Housing First for including homeless people into the housing market.

**Table 4.7.** Potential of Housing First for including homeless people into the housing market in relation with the features of housing systems.

City	General availability		Availability of affordable houses	Competition	Tenure security	Potential of HF for including the homeless
	Rental sector	Social housing				
Bologna	Medium	Small	Medium	Medium	Medium	Moderate
Budapest	Small	Small	Low	High	Limited	Very limited
London	Large	Large	Low	High	Limited	Limited
Stockholm	Large	Medium	Low	High	High	Limited
Vienna	Very large	Very large	Medium	Limited	High	High

*Source: Author's elaboration*

Four main situations as regards the potential of Housing First for including homeless people into the housing market emerge from the analysis of the case studies and their contextual conditions in terms of local and national housing systems.

#### ***High potential for including the homeless into the housing market through Housing First***

This situation is observed in Vienna, and is the outcome of a combination of an exceptional availability of houses for rent, and for social rent, which limits problems of affordability and the competition for access to affordable housing. In Vienna, the rental sector accounts for 80 per cent of the total housing stock. Half of this stock is socially rented, being directly managed by the Municipality (25 per cent of the stock) or by housing associations pursuing public scopes (another 14 per cent of the stock). Due to this large availability of houses for rent, promoters of Housing First in Vienna are not reporting specific difficulties in

procuring apartments for the programme. Housing policy clearly matters in this situation: in order to guarantee the availability not only of houses for rent but also of affordable houses for rent, rents should be sufficiently low and social housing allocation rules should be effective in creating the conditions for everybody to access a decent home. The availability per se is however a necessary starting point to evaluate the potential of Housing First for including homeless people into housing markets. A large availability of rented dwellings makes it easier for Housing First programmes to find apartments for their beneficiaries. It also makes it more feasible for Housing First to be adopted as an approach to house a large number of both primary and secondary homeless people. The existence of such a broad and effective social housing sector limits competition between individuals and social groups for accessing affordable housing, and this allows Housing First to be implemented at a relatively large scale without undermining the principle of equality in accessing housing. Under these conditions, which are rather unique in the European panorama, Housing First qualifies as a potential approach to include both primary and secondary homeless people into housing markets. There is more: Housing First tenants enjoy a rather strong tenancy protection in the Austrian housing system, thus enforcing their effective inclusion on a permanent basis.

*Moderate potential for including the homeless into the housing market through Housing First*

This situation is observed in Bologna. The city has a small social housing sector but a medium rental sector, which means that there is a certain availability of privately rented houses. Housing affordability is a problem, but not so severe like in other European cities, and mainly depends from the low availability of social houses. Despite the limited supply, competition to access affordable housing is not so severe, mainly because of a not so high housing demand, compared to other cities. Within this general frame, the outcome is a moderate potential for Housing First to be used as a driver of housing inclusion. On one hand, the social housing sector does not appear as a viable solution for Housing First tenants: not only it is small, but it is often occupied with tenancy agreements for indefinite terms, with only 400 apartments assigned every year by the Municipality. On the other hand, there is room for addressing the private rental market to procure apartments for Housing First. It is actually what the promoters of the project did, being successful in building a network of private landlords disposed to make their properties available at reduced rent in change for some services provided by the programme: ordinary maintenance interventions, support in administrative procedures, guarantee of a regular payment of the rent. As already mentioned, this practice has negative effects on tenure security, since the association promoting the

project, and not the homeless person, is the legal holder of the tenancy contract. The potential of using Housing First is thus limited by the effects on housing stability in the specific case study, although it remains a moderate potential for addressing homelessness through Housing First in the city.

*Limited potential for including the homeless into the housing market through Housing First*

This situation is observable in London and Stockholm. Both cities are increasingly confronted with very tight urban housing markets, which strongly reduce the theoretically favourable effects of institutional conditions at the national level. Housing systems of the UK and Sweden are built on very different philosophical assumptions, but practically share some features which could theoretically foster Housing First: a rather large rental sector (36 per cent in the UK, 35 in Sweden) and of social/public housing sector (18 per cent in the UK and 17 per cent in Sweden), and a generous, albeit declining, scheme of housing allowances. In addition, in the UK a strong legal basis to provide accommodation to homeless people exists, with a duty of securing accommodation to statutory homeless under the auspices of the national Housing Act. In Sweden, a sophisticated rent regulation system aims at keeping under control both public and private rents. Despite of this national background, urban housing markets of the two cities are characterised by a combination of factors that strongly affects the availability of affordable housing, especially for low-income households. A substantial demographic pressure increases the demand for housing, and especially for affordable housing, resulting in growing prices and competition for accessing to the housing market. The building of new houses for social purposes is not convenient for housing companies, included for public actors that are increasingly requested to act on a for profit basis. For these reasons, both cities experience a housing shortage, especially in the most affordable part of the stock, and a process of segregation of low-income households in the most deprived neighbourhoods. Social or public housing is overwhelmed with applications, and long and growing waiting lists are established. Bigger cities, and some big cities more than others, are also under the attention of global financial actors, which increasingly buy properties for speculation, making the prices higher. The combined action of these factors makes housing markets in those cities not favourable to the development of programmes, like Housing First, which aim at including more vulnerable people into the regular housing market. Finding available apartments for social purposes turns out into a challenging task: both London and Stockholm Housing First promoters report relevant difficulties in procuring few apartments for the project (10 apartments in London and 24 in Stockholm). Both private (in



London) and public (in Stockholm) housing providers are not interested in allocating apartments for social purposes, especially to candidates perceived as troubling, like the beneficiaries of Housing First projects, as they can easily rent them to candidates perceived as more reliable and stable. Those private and public landlords who accept to participate in Housing First programmes generally reserve to the projects apartments located in the less valuable parts of the city, which are also the most deprived. This is not an ideal solution neither for Housing First beneficiaries nor for those neighbourhoods. Under these circumstances, the potential of Housing First for integrating homeless people into housing markets appears as limited.

*Very limited potential for including the homeless into the housing market through Housing First*

This situation is observed in Budapest, where both the rental sector in general, and the social housing sector in particular, are extremely small, with a structural low availability of houses for rent and for social rent. This makes it immediately clear that the potential for including the homeless into the housing market through Housing First is very limited. Such a small supply of houses for rent makes them very expensive in the private sector, and also unaffordable in the social sector, where candidates are required to cover the costs of renovation thus excluding the most needy. Furthermore, socially rented houses are often occupied with tenancy agreements for indefinite terms, and the turnover is very reduced. This makes it very difficult to find apartments for Housing First in the social housing sector, not to speak of the market sector. In a situation of such limited availability, competition is very high, and granting some people with access to regular and stable houses opens a clear issue of equality. Finally, tenure security is also weak in the Hungarian context. To contrast the indefinite occupation of social housing, contracts are increasingly short-term also in the social housing sector, and so it is also for Housing First tenants.

To conclude this overview on the potential and limits of Housing First for the purpose of housing inclusion of homeless people, we highlight some important learnings:

- a. Housing availability is important but affordability makes the difference. Low availability generally hinders the development of Housing First, also raising consequent issues in terms of affordability and degree of competition. Large availability is however not a guarantee of a good environment for Housing First. Not so dissimilar situations in terms

of availability (like Vienna with London and Stockholm) may result in opposite outcomes, when affordability is not granted.

- b. As for affordability and tenure security, public social housing is the best solution almost everywhere. However, in contexts where social housing is not effective in meeting the housing needs of the general population, which is the case almost everywhere with the partial exception of Vienna, drawing on the social housing sector to procure apartments for Housing First raises immediate issues of competition and equality.
- c. Not to further drain the social public housing stock and worsen competition, the private rental sector appears as a more viable solution for Housing First tenants. Questions here are on affordability and tenure security. Market rents are usually unaffordable for Housing First tenants, and they should therefore be reduced to meet the financial capacity of the most vulnerable. This implies the achievement of agreements with private landlords, who are reluctant to make their properties available for potentially troubling tenants at reduced rents, which makes the process of procuring apartments more demanding. Furthermore, tenure security in the private sector is generally weaker than tenure security in the public social sector. This is another important issue to be fixed, to avoid extreme cases like the one in Bologna, where Housing First tenants are not legally entitled to any tenancy right.
- d. That social needs may be met in the private sector is a general tendency in housing policy in many contexts. Housing First may therefore represent an important driver of this process, and a field where to innovate practices through which this orientation concretely applies.
- e. Local systems may be more important than national systems. The national background is important to orient local configurations, which are everywhere in line with national housing arrangements. Local forces, or global forces acting at the urban level, may however heavily interfere with the situation in the background and dramatically change the outcomes of national systems.

#### **4.4 The coping strategies of Housing First practices**

Within this generally unfavourable framework, with the exception of the city of Vienna, Housing First practices may, and should, actively move to face these difficult structural conditions, by taking very seriously the matter of finding affordable apartments and granting housing stability within their specific context. The favourable structural conditions are not the

only reason of the success of the project in Vienna in procuring apartments for Housing First tenants; promoters established a dedicated platform involving 17 housing companies and associations, which substantially simplifies the procedure for finding apartments when needed. Similarly, the promoters of the project in Bologna were able to limit the possible negative impact of the structure of the housing market, and namely the low availability of social housing, by structuring an attractive service for private landlords. The service has been successfully proposed as a way to collect stably and punctually the rent, thanks to the mediation of the leading association, which signs the contract on behalf of the beneficiaries, granting for them in case they fall into rent arrears. For some landlords, it is preferable to earn a lower rent rather than risking opening totally unreliable procedures for evictions in case of rent arrears. Furthermore, the project provides small renovation and maintenance activities. Finally, the association carries out all the administrative tasks to be accomplished to establish and manage a rental agreement. The service has been launched through an effective communication campaign in the local media, TVs and newspapers, which served as a further incentive for the landlords, who could feel part of the solution of a problem regarding their city. In London and Stockholm, the project did not manage to effectively counteract the effects of the tight local housing markets. The borough of Camden, promoting the project in London, came to the decision of assigning the management of the programme to a new organisation, properly to improve the system for procuring apartments. The organisation could indeed count on the collaboration of a social enterprise, specialised in attaining properties for social purposes. Despite of this, the situation has not improved. Similarly, the configuration of the housing market in Stockholm is proving to be difficult to be dealt with. A municipal housing company collaborates in the project, by providing apartments for Housing First beneficiaries, while other three public companies refused to participate. This makes the only housing company involved in a position of power when deciding on interruption of the contracts. No specific strategies have been developed to procure apartments from private landlords. Analysing the strategies adopted in the case studies of the research, we can identify some important learnings to be considered by Housing First programmes and projects:

- a. The Pathways Housing First guidelines recommend hiring a housing specialist within the team of the programme. This research confirms the value of this recommendation: a person within the team of Housing First programmes should be in charge of procuring apartments, establishing and maintaining profitable relationships with housing providers and, last but not least, supporting tenants in housing maintenance.

- b. Involving housing providers in the project is a basic strategy to be successful in procuring affordable apartments for the scopes of Housing First. Housing providers should not only be asked for the availability of apartments; their voice should be represented in the governance of the project, and they should have the possibility to raise issues and discuss them with the other organisation managing the initiatives. Furthermore, they should be invited to participate in dedicated events, like training sessions or informal meetings, or in important events regarding the life of the project, like conferences, press conferences, social events. They should be clearly informed about the goals of Housing First, the situation of homelessness in the city, the benefit of housing the homeless not only for them but also for the whole society and community. Furthermore, information should be provided on the advantages of participating in the programme for the landlords: rents are supposed to be paid always in full and on time; the apartments are not going to be vacant, since the programme commits with providing new tenants in case of dismissals; both the tenants and the landlords are supported by professional staff available seven days and 24 hours; eventual damages are repaired by the programme; and so on.
- c. Such a profitable relationship with housing providers may also institutionalise in permanent networks or platforms at the city level, which could aggregate public and private housing and social service providers to co-design, test and implement solutions to procure housing for social purposes in the city. The scope of the network should not be limited to Housing First needs and users.

#### **4.5 The links between Housing First, housing regimes and welfare regimes**

Hitherto, we provided insights on the relationship between Housing First initiatives and national and local housing systems. We are also interested in possible more general relationships between the potential of Housing First and the types of housing regimes presented in chapter one. Housing markets and specific housing systems are indeed, to a more or less extent, an outcome of philosophical and sociological conceptions backing housing policy decisions and measures. Table 4.8 relates the type of housing regimes and some general housing policy orientations with the potential of Housing First for housing inclusion as resulted from the analysis of the case studies.

**Table 4.8.** Housing regimes, housing policy orientations and the potential of Housing First for housing inclusion of the homeless.

<b>Housing regime</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Case study</b>	<b>Housing policy orientations</b>	<b>Potential of HF for including the homeless</b>
Unitary	Sweden	HF Stockholm	Tenure neutrality Market regulation Universalistic public sector Market-based public provision	Limited
	Austria	HF Vienna	Tenure neutrality Market regulation Universalistic public sector	High
Dual	Italy	HF Bologna	Preference for home ownership Limited market regulation Residual social sector	Moderate
	Hungary	HF Budapest	Marked preference for home ownership Deregulation Residual social sector	Very limited
	UK	HF London	Light preference for home ownership Deregulation Residual social sector Market-based public provision	Limited

*Source: Author's elaboration.*

A direct connection between types of housing regimes and the potential of Housing First for including homeless people into the housing market does not emerge from our analysis. Housing First in Austria may play role in structural integration of homeless people in the housing market, while its role in Sweden appears as much limited. However, we must consider the specificities of the two local contexts of the research, and cannot conclude that the outcome would be the same in other localities in the two countries. A more coherent outcome seems to be observable in countries adopting a dual housing regime. In all the three countries, contextual conditions do not appear as favourable to a structural integration of homeless people through Housing First. However, this research is not sophisticated enough to conclude that Housing First has a limited future in dual housing regimes. More in specific, we propose some discussions on the relationship between some specific housing policy orientations and Housing First. Housing policies oriented by the principle of tenure neutrality are the most adequate to maintain a certain availability of houses for rent. Instead, housing systems promoting a preference for home ownership result in a structure of housing markets with limited rental sectors, with the partial exception of the UK. However, they do not

guarantee on housing affordability, which is influenced by other factors. The existence of a rent regulation system should control rent prices and improve housing affordability in general, and therefore also for Housing First tenants. However, rent regulation is not a guarantee of low rents; for instance, the existence of a strong regulation system does not prevent Stockholm from being a not so favourable context for HF, because of other institutional conditions operating at different scales. Broadly speaking, social housing providers are increasingly required to act as market actors, like other for profit providers; this entails that they limit their social purposes to include tenants that can pay the rent and create less troubles and economic loss. This tendency, which is particularly marked in Sweden and the UK, hinders the possibility of integrating Housing First tenants into housing markets, since they are perceived as troubled and not reliable tenants. Anyway, regardless of which housing regime frames the implementation of Housing First initiatives, it emerges the importance of integrating it into the public housing policy at different scales, as it will be discussed in the conclusions of this work.

Housing-related factors are not the only factors influencing the potential of Housing First for the inclusion of homeless people into the housing market. Amongst others, the interplay with welfare regimes plays a major role. The extent to which the welfare system is capable to support vulnerable people is decisive for Housing First, since its very beginning in New York City. The original programme of Pathways to Housing was explicitly addressed to homeless people integrated in a way into the welfare system, by drawing on national housing allowances to sustain the payment of the rent and on national assurance schemes to sustain social support. Similar arrangements are made in European programmes, with differences to adapt to national and local welfare configurations. In all the five case studies, a selection is made to include beneficiaries with a source of income, usually deriving from social or housing benefits, to pay the rent, at least partially. This excludes homeless people with no income from Housing First, and has consequences on the way Housing First programmes are shaped. Generally speaking, more generous welfare regimes should be more supportive to Housing First in this sense, by providing a greater number of people, and in specific of homeless people, with more generous social benefits. This hypothesis is not confirmed by data, but we can provide some empirical material for illustrating the relationship between Housing First and welfare regimes. A clear example emerges in the case of Bologna. Italy has never introduced a measure of minimum income, which reduces the range of potential beneficiaries of Housing First in Bologna to homeless people receiving social benefits related

to age (pensions), physical or mental conditions (incapacity benefits), position in the labour market (unemployment benefits), to be used to pay the rent. These conditions posed by the configuration of welfare system limit the inclusionary effects of Housing First, and its actual potential for contrasting homelessness. The promoters of Housing First in Bologna designed some variations to the original model to cope with these structural conditions: not to exclude all people with no income, the project provides intensive support for activating the beneficiaries in the labour market, through paid internships mainly in local social cooperatives, which are committed to dedicate special availability to Housing First users. This circumstance still represents a barrier for those homeless people with no income who are not in the condition to rapidly commit with a job activity. For instance, drug addicts, a major target group in the original Housing First model, are excluded from the project, since they are not considered as immediately employable. It also raises issues about the principle of separation between housing and social support, since in this case housing is *de facto* conditional on the adherence to active labour market initiatives. Similarly, in Budapest the minimum income is not so effective to support homeless people. The monthly amount is very small, 70 Euros in 2013 (Busch-Geertsema, 2013), and it practically equalise the rent to be paid by Housing First users (65 Euros), who should clearly integrate it with other sources of income to live. Furthermore, since 2012 the provision of the minimum income is conditional on activation measures, with claimants required to work or volunteer for at least 30 days during a year to be eligible for minimum income, a requirement that represents a barrier for those homeless people who are not in the conditions to be activated, like many Housing First users are. The case of London provides us with another illuminating example of the interplay between housing and welfare institutional settings in shaping the way Housing First initiative are designed, and their outcome on homelessness. Access to the project is bounded to the entitlement to social benefits, namely the housing benefit, the unemployment benefit or the incapacity benefit. Candidates with no income, or no sufficient income, are supported to be put under the Job Seeker Allowance. However, homeless people pertaining to the target group of the project, that is chronic homeless people with mental illness and/or substance abuse, cannot often meet Job Seeker Allowance's criteria in the long term, thus threatening their permanence in the Housing First programme. There is more: since January 2014 migrant jobseekers from the European Economic Area (EEA) can no longer get housing benefits if they are on Job Seeker Allowance. Migrants who already lived in the UK and receive both benefits lose their housing benefits if they move to another district. This circumstance excludes *de facto* most EEA migrants from Camden Housing First project, since beneficiaries

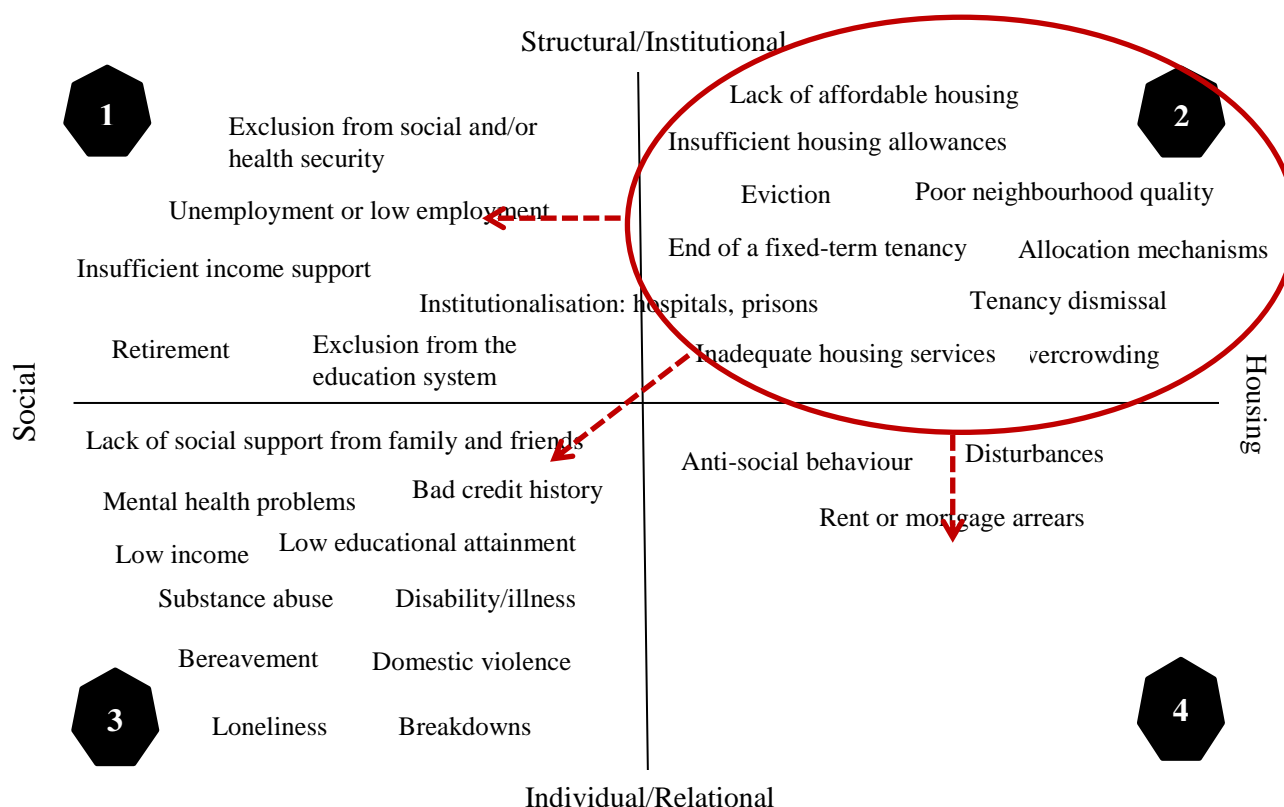
are moved to other districts and this would automatically entail the loss of entitlement to housing benefits. These examples provide us with a framework, which deserves further research, in which Housing First may be, to a more or less great extent, effective for the inclusion of people excluded from the housing system, but not for the inclusion of people excluded from the welfare system.



## Conclusions

Despite the theoretical advances in considering homelessness as caused by both social and housing factors, homelessness policies and services are still mainly conceived as social services to treat individual problems of homeless people, like mental illness and substance addiction. Housing First came to challenge this approach, by claiming a right to housing as its first principle, and the provision of a stable and affordable housing solution in the regular housing market as its first action, unconditionally on compliance with other treatment services. This housing solution is intended to be a place people can call “my home”, an event that marks the way out of homelessness. As the title of this research promises, people entering Housing First programmes are indeed “not homeless anymore”, provided that the housing solution comes with all the features to enjoy the three domains of home: the availability of a suitable space (physical domain); the possibility to enjoy privacy and social relations (social domain); the disposal of a security of occupation (legal domain). The key factor for considering the housing solution provided by Housing First programmes “a home” is in the access to stable and affordable housing in the regular housing market it grants. This is a major difference between Housing First and other services addressing homeless people. By providing access to regular housing, it directly addresses the structural and institutional risk factors of the housing dimension of homelessness as conceptualised in chapter one.

**Figure 5.1.** Action of Housing First on dimensions and risk factors of homelessness.



*Sources: Our elaboration from Busch-Geertsema et al., 2010; Stephens et al., 2010; Edgar 2009; FEANTSA, 2008; Edgar et al., 2002.*

By providing their beneficiaries with a stable and affordable housing solution, Housing First secure many of the structural and institutional risk factors related to the housing dimension. By the way, it also causes a reduction of the effects of individual risk factors: Housing First services have proved to reduce the risk of anti-social behaviours and disturbances, which still remain a problem to be handled in any context; furthermore, they usually reduce the risk of falling into rent arrears by providing specific support, in terms of advice and, in some cases, economic support where disposable incomes are not enough to pay the rent. As described in chapter two and confirmed by the interviewees of this research, Housing First services have also proved to deliver positive outcomes in stabilising individual risk factors related to the social dimension, more precisely in terms of: improvement in physical and mental health conditions; reduction in substance consumption; improvement in social and community integration; reconnection with family members and friends. Finally, Housing First may also reduce the impact of institutional risk factors pertaining to the social dimension, with beneficiaries supported in claiming benefits to which they may be entitled, accessing to other social or health services, or looking for a job, although with limited results.

Housing First is therefore a way to stabilise individual factors and limit the effect of structural factors on individual lives. The extent to which it may also be a strategy to address structural and institutional conditions causing and underlying homelessness, at least in the housing dimension, has been the object of this research.

Access to housing is, again, our central point. Including the homeless in the housing market means moving them away from the very social housing sector where they actually live in different non-regular, non-stable and/or non-affordable housing situations: the streets, night shelters, collective accommodation, insecure and inadequate housing, and resettle them in the private or public rental sector. In some cases, only chronic homeless people with mental illness are included in Housing First programmes, in other cases also homeless people living in insecure and inadequate housing are included. This circumstance broadens the scope of Housing First to address all forms of homelessness and raises the question of its actual potential for structurally including the homeless in the housing market. Following the analysis proposed in chapter four, this potential may be very limited, limited, moderate or high depending on structural and institutional conditions related to national and local housing systems. Where a vast rental sector combined with a broad and effective social housing sector exists, Housing First may accommodate a large number of people with different needs. In contexts characterised by a scarcity in the availability of affordable houses for rent, and especially of socially rented houses, it encounters much difficulties, as in contexts characterised by tight urban housing markets, like those cities dealing with an increasing demographic pressure, housing shortage, high housing prices, and long waiting lists for accessing to social or public housing. Another important issue emerged in the analysis is the possible disturbance of Housing First to more general public aims of housing policy. Including the homeless in the regular housing market is certainly a way to accomplish to the public task of redistribution, but it also raises issues of equality and social justice, especially in contexts where also other vulnerable groups are excluded from access to housing for lack of affordable housing. Access to housing is regulated by public housing policy, which determines allocation criteria for public houses and can also promote or hinder access to private housing by means of different policy tools. Homeless people included in Housing First services get direct access to apartments in the regular housing market, either in the public or private rental sector, while access to housing is not granted for many other vulnerable individuals and groups. This risk is very much concrete according to our analysis confirmed

by the interviewed professionals working at different levels in the field, although the extent to which it actually undermines social justice is context-dependent.

This latter consideration on equal access to housing gets us to do a further step in our analysis. It is indeed rather clear at this point that Housing First is a housing policy. A policy whose potential is limited not only by the configuration of national and local housing systems but also by its not being understood as a housing policy. In social research and practice, Housing First is indeed included in the typologies of homelessness services together with emergency accommodation, temporary accommodation, supported housing, and other social and health services like outreach social support, day centres, mobile food services, specialist support services. It should also be included in typologies of housing measures and services. The provision and regulation of access to affordable housing is a housing policy task to be performed by means of different instruments, like schemes to promote access to home ownership, or to favourable mortgage schemes, shared ownership schemes, rent control mechanisms, rent deposit schemes, direct public provision of social housing, housing subsidies to private housing providers, housing benefits, fiscal incentives and deductions. Housing First could be, or should be, one of them. With defined scopes in terms of target groups and housing needs to be met, integrated with the scopes and housing needs met by other measures. Despite its name, principles and operation, this is not happening. Policy makers in the field of housing are not involved in none of the case studies. Housing First is conceived as a new and promising service addressing the social problem of homelessness, and is incardinated within the social policy sector, just like any other service addressing homelessness. Housing stands in the background, with homeless people not perceived as gaining access to housing, but as being settled in regular, stable, affordable and independent apartments “instead of night shelters”. The magnitude of providing access to housing instead of simply a housing solution is still not completely recognised by research on and practice of Housing First. Still, the understanding of Housing First as a housing policy might provide a relevant contribute at different scales to the long-standing debate on the right to housing, the role of housing in welfare states and, more concretely, the modalities through which societies should grant access to decent and affordable housing for all.

This research intends to open a breach for considering Housing First in the light of housing, but this re-framing operation certainly need to be supported by further research. The relationship between Housing First and housing systems, policies and markets should be

further disentangled, both theoretically and empirically. The phenomenon to be handled by Housing First needs to be clarified in its extent by improving the reliability and comparability of data on homelessness collected both at national and local level. Ideally, each national and local context should have a clear esteem of the extent of homelessness divided in the four conceptual categories of the ETHOS typology: rooflessness, houselessness, insecure and inadequate housing. Furthermore, a much deeper investigation on the interplay of housing and welfare in defining the scope and potential of Housing First should be provided. A common requirement for accessing Housing First programmes across Europe is the availability of even a minimum source of income to be devoted to the payment of an even very reduced rent. Sources of income for homeless people are likely to derive from social benefits including pensions, unemployment benefits, capacity benefits, housing benefits, minimum income schemes. The relationship between institutional configurations of national and local welfare and housing systems evidently determines who may be included in the housing market through Housing First programmes. Those who are excluded from both the housing and welfare systems remain excluded from access to both systems. No Housing First for them?

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